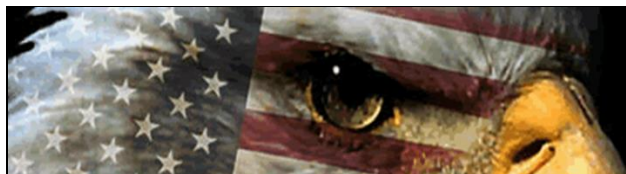



<div>  <div> Washington State Fusion Center  <b>INFOCUS</b>  TUESDAY — 12 JUL 2022 </div>  </div>			
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## Events, Opportunities

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HEADLINE	07/12 Computer chip shortage turns to glut
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.reuters.com/technology/computer-chips-face-toilet-paper-hoarding-moment-shortage-turns-glut-2022-07-12/">https://www.reuters.com/technology/computer-chips-face-toilet-paper-hoarding-moment-shortage-turns-glut-2022-07-12/</a>
GIST	<p>OAKLAND, Calif., July 12 (Reuters) - A supply chain crisis triggered by the global pandemic deprived makers of PCs and smartphones to cars of computer chips needed to make their products.</p> <p>All that suddenly changed over three weeks from late May to June, as high inflation, China's latest COVID lockdown, and the war in Ukraine dampened consumer spending, especially on PCs and smartphones.</p>

Chip shortages turned into a glut in some sectors, taking Wall Street by surprise. By late June, memory chip firm Micron Technology Inc (MU.O) said it would reduce production. The market reversal caught Micron off guard, admitted Chief Business Officer Sumit Sadana. [read more](#)

As U.S. chip earnings reporting season kicks off later this month, TechInsights' chip economist Dan Hutcheson warned of more bad news following Micron's grim forecast. "Micron kind of plowed the ground, with their honesty," he said.

Worries about an industry downturn have slammed chip stocks, with the Philadelphia Semiconductor index (.SOX) tumbling 35% so far in 2022, far more than the S&P 500's (.SPX) 19% loss.

Hoarding is making it worse. Like nervous shoppers raiding supermarket aisles for toilet paper ahead of a COVID-19 lockdown, manufacturers stockpiled computer chips during the pandemic. Before that, "just in time" manufacturing was the norm for fiscally conservative companies, which ordered parts as close to production time as possible to avoid excess inventory, reduce warehouse capacity and cut upfront spending.

During the pandemic that shifted to what some jokingly call a "just in case" practice of stockpiling chips. "Hoarding is a sign they think it's essential until one day they look at it and say, 'Why do I have all this inventory?'" said Hutcheson, who has been forecasting chip supply and demand for over 40 years. "It's kind of like toilet paper." The big chip U-turn has hit unevenly across business sectors, experts said. Big suppliers of chips to consumer electronics makers, especially low-end smartphones, will be hit hardest by the downturn, said Tristan Gerra, Baird's senior analyst for semiconductors. Nvidia Corp (NVDA.O), the design giant whose graphic chips are used for gaming and mining cryptocurrency, could see "another shoe drop" as prices continue to fall, exacerbated by the recent cryptocurrency market crash, Gerra said. Among those least affected by a glut are Apple Inc's suppliers such as the world's top chip factory Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Co (2330.TW), said Wedbush analyst Matt Bryson. Demand remains high for Apple devices, which are more upmarket. Chipmakers supplying automotive and data centers will also thrive, said Gerra, noting unabated demand. "In power management, we're going gangbusters," said an executive of another global chipmaker who asked not to be identified.

However, for radio frequency chips used in smartphones, "we're seeing a pullback because of handsets," he added.

The executive's chip factory is "retooling" production lines to make more power management chips for cars and fewer RF chips, which could eventually help relieve some of the auto chip shortages, he said.

While industry executives and analysts cannot say how many excess chips are in warehouses around the world, first-quarter inventory hit a record high at key electronics manufacturing services companies, said Jefferies' analyst Mark Lipacis in a July 1 note. The previous first-quarter record was over two decades ago, right before the dotcom bubble burst.

Manufacturers may decide to use up chips in warehouses instead of buying new ones, and cancel orders, Lipacis warned.

Auto chipmakers are safe for now, some analysts said. But that may not last long.

In his September note Bernstein analyst Stacy Rasgon said automakers were ordering far more chips than they appeared to need, and that trend is continuing, he told Reuters.

That will create a problem when vehicle makers stop buying chips to use up their stockpiles.

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HEADLINE	07/12 US diplomatic presence, aid push in Pacific
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2022/07/12/kamala-harris-pacific-islands-us-china/">https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2022/07/12/kamala-harris-pacific-islands-us-china/</a>

SYDNEY — The United States said Tuesday it would expand its diplomatic presence in the Pacific, as it seeks to counter the [growing influence of China](#) in a region of intensifying great-power rivalry.

The new efforts, which will be announced by Vice President Harris during a virtual address to leaders at the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF) in Fiji, will include two additional U.S. embassies and a tripling of some aid, among other measures.

The diplomatic push comes amid concerns that China has supplanted the United States as the friend of choice for some Pacific island nations. China struck a [security agreement](#) with the Solomon Islands in April despite American objections. And the Chinese foreign minister recently signed several other bilateral agreements during an eight-country tour of the region.

The Biden administration has sought to shift American focus from the Middle East to Asia. It has withdrawn U.S. troops from Afghanistan, ramped up the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue with Japan, Australia and India, and launched the [AUKUS pact](#) with Britain and Australia, which, like the Quad, is seen as a countermeasure to China's growing military assertiveness in the Indo-Pacific.

Yet China's security agreement with the Solomon Islands — the site of a key American military victory at Guadalcanal during World War II — appeared to catch the United States and its close regional allies, Australia and New Zealand, by surprise.

The new diplomatic initiatives come as the United States tries to restore some of its influence in the region.

"We are significantly stepping up our game in the Pacific islands," said a senior administration official who spoke to reporters on the condition of anonymity ahead of the vice president's PIF appearance. The official said the United States was not asking Pacific island nations to choose between it and China.

"We are focusing on our own engagement and our own interests and our own support," the official said. "Of course contrasts [with China] will be made, and we would like to think that contrast looks favorably on us, where we've been a responsible security actor in the region, in fact, in the entire Indo-Pacific, for many decades and have helped to preserve a free and open Indo-Pacific."

Among the measures Harris will announce to Pacific leaders will be new U.S. embassies in Kiribati and Tonga. In 2019, Kiribati and the Solomon Islands both switched their diplomatic recognition from Taiwan to China, underscoring the inroads Beijing has made in the region.

Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi visited both countries during his Pacific tour in late May and signed bilateral agreements with each.

Kiribati announced this week that it was withdrawing from the PIF, purportedly over a leadership dispute, although an opposition leader [told the Guardian](#) the withdrawal was due to Chinese pressure. China has denied that.

The U.S. official said that the Biden administration was "concerned" by Kiribati's withdrawal but that discussions over the issue are ongoing.

Harris will also announce that the administration aims to triple funding for economic development and ocean resilience in the region to \$60 million a year for the next decade, though Congress will have to approve the increase. Some of the funds would go toward combating the impact of climate change on the Pacific island nations, which are among the world's most vulnerable.

The United States will also appoint its first envoy to the Pacific Islands Forum, which, despite infighting, has emerged as a key regional bloc. In a sign of the region's growing geopolitical importance, the Biden administration will also design and release its first national strategy specifically devoted to the Pacific islands.

Harris will announce the return of the Peace Corps to Fiji, Tonga, Samoa and Vanuatu after volunteers were withdrawn during the pandemic. The Biden administration is also exploring expanding the program to additional Pacific island countries.

“We are expanding our footprint and making sure we have the people and apparatus in place to deepen our cooperation on a day-to-day basis and to deliver concrete results,” the senior administration official said.

But the Solomon Islands show the limitations of such outreach. In February, the Biden administration announced it would reopen its long-shuttered embassy in the nation’s capital, Honiara, only for China to announce its security agreement two months later.

That agreement stirred fears of a Chinese military base roughly 1,000 miles from Australian shores, though China and the Solomon Islands denied that would happen. China recently failed in an attempt to strike a similar but far broader security agreement with 10 Pacific island countries, but Beijing has suggested it will try again.

Australia’s recently elected center-left Labor government has also promised to boost diplomacy, aid and military ties to Pacific island nations to counter Beijing’s growing influence.

Despite a slight easing of tensions between the two countries, highlighted by the [first ministerial meetings in three years](#), China has yet to lift punishing tariffs on Australia.

During a visit to Washington this week, Richard Marles, the Australian defense minister and deputy prime minister, [said](#) the United States and Australia will need to increase their presence in the Indo-Pacific, warning that a failure to maintain a balance of power could be “catastrophic.”

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HEADLINE	<b>07/11 Texas power grid nears brink in record heat</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.washingtonpost.com/climate-environment/2022/07/11/texas-record-heat-ercot-power-grid/">https://www.washingtonpost.com/climate-environment/2022/07/11/texas-record-heat-ercot-power-grid/</a>
GIST	<p>A serious summer heat wave is baking Texas with record temperatures and high humidity. Heat advisories and excessive heat warnings blanket much of the Lone Star State, with the National Weather Service calling the conditions “extreme” and “dangerously hot.”</p> <p>On Sunday, more than a dozen record highs were set throughout the state as temperatures soared as high as 113 degrees. Houston shot up to 105 degrees, matching its highest temperature ever recorded in July.</p> <p>Sunday <a href="#">was the state’s second-hottest day since at least 1950</a>, according to Maxar, a weather consulting firm.</p> <p>The record-challenging heat is forecast to persist through Tuesday, combining with a moist lower atmosphere to produce heat indexes above 110 degrees in the southeast part of the state.</p> <p>The statewide scorcher is enough to induce record high demand and tax the state’s beleaguered power grid, prompting the Electric Reliability Council of Texas to issue a public appeal for conservation during the hottest times of day.</p> <p>“With extreme hot weather driving record power demand across Texas, the Electric Reliability Council of Texas (ERCOT) is issuing a Conservation Appeal, asking Texans and Texas businesses to voluntarily conserve electricity, Monday, July 11 between 2-8 p.m.,” the agency wrote on its website. “ERCOT also issued a Watch for a projected reserve capacity shortage from 2-8 p.m. At this time, no systemwide outages are expected.”</p> <p><b>A taxed power grid</b></p>

Between conventional electricity generation sources and installed wind and solar arrays, ERCOT is projecting that, between 2 and 3 p.m., the statewide grid will be able to generate 80,168 megawatts (MW). During the same window, demand is anticipated to reach 79,671 MW. In other words, expected demand is only 0.61 percent less than total electric generation capacity, leaving very little wiggle room on the grid.

Last Friday, ERCOT set a record power usage peak for July of 78,204 MW, [wrote Austin NBC affiliate KXAN](#).

While the sunny weather is good for generating solar energy, stagnant winds beneath the heat dome mean wind generation will barely reach 10 percent of capacity. In most situations, states and municipalities can borrow energy from a neighbor if local demand exceeds capacity; Texas's drive for energy independence dating back to the early 20th century, however, meant that the state constructed its own grid, leaving no recourse in high-demand scenarios.

That proved [disastrous during the record cold wave of February 2021](#), when 3.5 million Texans were without power at one time as temperatures dipped to minus-2 degrees in Dallas and 13 degrees in Houston. Nearby states such as Oklahoma fared much better since its electrical infrastructure was interconnected with that of other states.

### **Sunday's records**

Sunday's high temperatures in Texas were extreme and record-breaking. Somerville, Tex., hit 113 degrees, and College Station made it to 111 degrees, the city's second-highest reading ever.

Waco managed to squeeze out a 109-degree high Sunday, which, [in addition to breaking a 105-year-old record](#), is the hottest temperature observed there since 2018 and the second-highest July temperature on record.

Dallas didn't set a record Sunday, but it did Saturday, of 107 degrees. Austin secured records both weekend days — 106 degrees Saturday and a staggering 110 degrees Sunday. That also ties for the hottest temperature Austin has ever recorded during the month of July.

Among other records, San Antonio hit 106 degrees, tying a record for July 10, and Corpus Christi soared to 100, surpassing the previous July 10 mark of 98. Galveston, San Angelo, Harlingen, McAllen and Brownsville also set record highs.

In addition to setting record daytime highs, many locations also endured record warm nights with low temperatures hovering near 80 degrees. Houston's low on Sunday was a record-warm 82 degrees.

"So overall you just experienced the warmest July day in nearly 150 years of records along the upper Texas coast," [wrote Eric Berger](#), a meteorologist for [SpaceWeather.com](#), a Houston weather website.

Outside of Texas, excessively hot weather swelled over Colorado and into the Central Plains. In Colorado, record highs were set in Pueblo (107) and Colorado Springs (97). In Nebraska, Imperial and McCook set records of 107 and 111, respectively. In Kansas, Hill City soared to a record of 111.

Over the weekend, Denver hit at least 100 degrees on both weekend days — reaching the century mark [on consecutive days for only the 14th time on record](#).

### **The forecast**

At present, a heat dome, or ridge of high pressure bringing hot, dry, sinking air, is parked over the Four Corners region. That's keeping most of Texas locked in its throes, with highs 10 to 15 degrees above average there and across the southern and central Plains as a whole.

By Tuesday, the heat should be relegated mainly to Texas and the Desert Southwest, as well as the Columbia River Basin in the Pacific Northwest, but readings will climb even higher — 105 in Dallas and



	<p>San Antonio, and 106 in Abilene. According to Maxar, <a href="#">Abilene has set 21 daily high temperature records</a> so far this year, and 18 records for warm overnight lows.</p> <p>Highs may drop a degree or two later in the week, but there's no immediate end in sight to shake readings above the century mark. Simply stated, it will be brutally hot in Texas until further notice.</p> <p>The heat, while a staple of every summer, is probably prolonged and made acutely more intense by the effects of human-induced climate change, whose signal is now present in everyday weather across the globe.</p> <p>"Sunday's weather was atrocious, and not a future I particularly want to leave to my children," Berger wrote.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>07/11 Portugal wildfires rage amid punishing heat</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2022/07/11/portugal-wildfires-heatwave-europe/">https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2022/07/11/portugal-wildfires-heatwave-europe/</a>
GIST	<p>Several wildfires are raging across Portugal, where a state of emergency has been declared amid a punishing heat wave sweeping Europe, where temperatures are expected to climb even higher in the days to come.</p> <p>As of Sunday, an estimated 3,000 firefighters were working to extinguish the blazes, Portugal's civil protection agency said, with areas along the outskirts of Lisbon the hardest hit. At least 29 people have been injured since the fires broke out, local authorities said Sunday.</p> <p>The European Commission said Monday that it had "mobilized its firefighting fleet to help Portugal fight destructive forest fires," as residents evacuated their homes in danger zones.</p> <p>Weather experts in Portugal say temperatures of up to 113 degrees Fahrenheit (45 degrees Celsius) could be reported from Tuesday in Alentejo — the region between Lisbon and the Algarve, Sky News reported. Strong winds of 40 miles per hour are also predicted across several regions. Local media reported Monday that fires in the districts of Santarém, Leiria and Vila Real were <a href="#">"the most worrying."</a></p> <p>Forest fires are not uncommon in Portugal, a heavily forested country that is fanned by winds from the Atlantic Ocean. Spain, which has also experienced devastating wildfires in recent weeks, sent Portugal two firefighting planes on Sunday, as the European Union <a href="#">said</a> it stood "ready to provide further assistance."</p> <p>Experts say extreme heat and unseasonably warm temperatures will only become more frequent and severe as the world grapples with the effects of human-caused climate change. Last month, a historic heat wave across Europe broke records in France and Spain, where temperatures reached as high as 104 degrees, unusual for the month of June.</p> <p>Scientists have long warned that climate change is extending the "wildfire season" in Portugal from two to five months, the BBC <a href="#">reported</a>. In 2017, more than 100 people died following blazes that led to widespread condemnation of the government's response to forest fires. Some emergency workers complained of a lack of equipment, while others said the forests were not properly managed or protected.</p> <p>The current nationwide state of emergency means people are barred from forest areas deemed high risk and that farmers are asked not to use any type of machinery that may cause a spark.</p> <p>Portuguese Prime Minister António Costa took to Twitter <a href="#">over the weekend</a>, writing, "PLEASE DO NOT START FIRES AND DO NOT USE MACHINES."</p> <p>The use of fireworks at celebrations and festivals has also been banned amid the high temperatures and drought, the Associated Press <a href="#">reported</a>.</p>

	<p>The fires came on quickly in some areas. “It was very sudden, a lot of smoke, all of a sudden the old house was lit,” one witness <a href="#">told the BBC</a> on Monday.</p> <p>In Spain last month, wildfires broke out near Valencia and across other parts of the country following days of extreme heat. In Italy, Rome recorded its highest temperature of 105 degrees Fahrenheit (40.6 Celsius).</p> <p>Poland and Austria were also <a href="#">hit by</a> abnormally high temperatures as was Britain, a nation where air-conditioning is scarce — raising concerns for the elderly and the homeless.</p> <p>Hannah Cloke, a climate scientist at the University of Reading, <a href="#">told The Washington Post</a> that Britain was “really not prepared” for extreme heat, with offices, houses and nursing homes “not built to help keep people cool.”</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>07/11 King Co. reworks emergency renters’ aid</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://crosscut.com/news/2022/07/king-county-reworks-aid-after-some-renters-fall-through-cracks">https://crosscut.com/news/2022/07/king-county-reworks-aid-after-some-renters-fall-through-cracks</a>
GIST	<p>Christine Myers had never missed a rent payment before the world shut down in March 2020. But the Kent grandmother drives Uber and Lyft for a living, and the pandemic cratered her income. She soon fell behind on rent at the apartment she shares with her husband and granddaughter.</p> <p>When Myers heard about King County’s emergency rental assistance program in the summer of 2021, she applied right away. She was told she qualified. Because there was never enough money in the program to meet the need, Myers entered a lottery along with other applicants, hoping to get picked at random to receive assistance.</p> <p>Then, she waited. And waited. And waited some more.</p> <p>The apartment had its share of problems — broken appliances, drug dealers across the street — but the alternative was much worse. “It’s the only place I can afford,” Myers said. “I’ve lived here for seven years, and I don’t want to be homeless.”</p> <p>The state eviction moratorium meant her landlord could not evict her over the back rent she owed. But the stress of a five-figure debt took its toll. In October, Myers crashed her car, something she blames on the distraction of having the threat of eviction hanging over her head.</p> <p>In January of this year, a case manager from the emergency rental assistance program called her and asked a few questions about her income. Her hopes were up.</p> <p>Myers said she checked her email religiously, but never heard back from King County. It turned out her request for rent relief had been denied. The case manager had overstated their household income, disqualifying them for help. The program is targeted at lower-income renters earning 50% or less of the area median income, which is \$47,800 for a two-person household.</p> <p>Myers learned about her denial from her apartment’s building manager. She called the rental assistance program and was told she needed a copy of the denial letter in order to appeal. When she said she never received the letter, they wouldn’t send her a new copy.</p> <p>She turned to the Housing Justice Project to file a formal grievance. Operated by the King County Bar Association, the nonprofit group provides pro bono services to low-income renters in eviction court. It has also contracted with King County to manage the grievance process for the rental assistance program.</p> <p>Myers is one of more than 200 people who have filed formal grievances about emergency rental assistance denials through the Housing Justice Project. That number doesn’t include people who contacted King County directly or the ones who simply never followed up about their bad experiences.</p>

All told, that's quite small compared with [the nearly 38,000 households that received a combined \\$332.6 million](#) in rental assistance since the program started in August 2020. But it's still worth understanding what went wrong — some say an excess of subcontractors led to inequitable service for some applicants — and how the program has since been restructured. The county continues to distribute the last of its rental assistance money and is looking ahead to the possibility of a permanent program.

The Housing Justice Project eventually helped Myers get a new copy of her denial letter, but her case manager told her she had missed the two-week window to appeal and there was nothing they could do.

"I literally begged her," Myers said. "And they wouldn't help. It was really disheartening. She didn't care that I was going to be homeless. She just pretty much said no."

### **Poor communication, red tape**

Jake Phillips leads the grievance work for the Housing Justice Project. He said the job is about doing anything possible to overturn an applicant's denial. People come to him with a wide variety of issues. There are those who, like Myers, say they never got a denial email. Others say their landlords refused to participate in the program. In some cases, the county incorrectly flagged an application as fraudulent, such as the time a landlord and tenant had the same last name. Phillips said he had to help the tenant prove they were actually unrelated.

Sometimes applicants did not follow all the rules of the program, and there's nothing the Housing Justice Project can do. For example, because the program is meant to keep people in their homes, applicants are disqualified if they move out before receiving their rental assistance, even if they otherwise qualified.

That's what happened to Eamonn Lindsey, a Seattle renter who worked in fast food when the pandemic first hit. With his work hours slashed, he couldn't keep up on rent. Then his two roommates stopped paying. He ended up on the hook for tens of thousands of dollars in rental debt.

Lindsey said he thought he was in the clear when he heard his application for rental assistance had been approved, and he moved out of the apartment he couldn't afford. He thought he was doing the right thing and instead lost his chance for help, leaving him with crushing debt. He spent several months homeless, mostly living in a shelter before he could scrape together enough money doing gig work deliveries to move into "quite possibly the worst building in the University District."

"The people who fall through the cracks don't really seem to matter that much," said Lindsey. "And there are a lot of people falling through the cracks right now."

Phillips said the most common complaint involves poor communication from the program's administrators. Tenants would apply for help then enter a black hole about the status of their application.

A reader initiated this story by contacting Crosscut's [Washington Recovery Watch](#) team to describe her repeated attempts to get clear help or answers from the program. As her eviction date neared, she encountered a feedback loop of auto-reply assurances that things were happening in the back end and to just sit tight.

Phillips said part of the problem with communication stemmed from the system of community-based subcontractors King County used to administer the rental assistance program. The county contracted with more than 70 nonprofit community groups to help do outreach and administer rent relief.

Officials hoped to improve equitable access to the program for low-income communities of color and immigrants by working with groups already operating in those communities. While Phillips said he thinks there's value in the model, he also saw inconsistent performance from the community-based organizations.

"The way it was implemented, there wasn't accountability and there were some underperformers in the mix," he explained. "Not every applicant was given the same experience. Some organizations were super-



communicative. Others seemed to not have done a good enough job being upfront about communicating with tenants.”

Leo Flor, director of the King County Department of Community and Human Services, acknowledged the communication problem and blamed both the scale of the program and the speed with which the county had to create it from scratch.

“It became DCHS’s largest client-serving program overnight,” he said.

But the county stands by the community-based subcontractor model, arguing that the application assistance, door-knocking and follow-up that nonprofits provided within their communities resulted in the program reaching people disproportionately impacted by eviction. About 75% of emergency rent recipients were Black, Indigenous or other people of color, and 58% were female heads of households. Studies have found Black and Latino renters are evicted far more than white renters, and women are evicted far more than men, both in [King County](#) and [nationally](#).

### **A revised system**

In May, King County restructured the emergency rental assistance program. United Way of King County, which has been on contract since the beginning, is now in charge of managing the program including leading on grievances. The county still contracts with the Housing Justice Project to provide pro bono legal services in eviction court. Before the pandemic, United Way and the Housing Justice Project worked together on a program called [Home Base](#) to provide eviction services and rent relief on a much smaller scale.

Twenty-four service groups remain on contract with the county to provide case management and other assistance. But, explained Jake Janesch, United Way’s rental assistance program manager, all of the community groups now work directly with United Way. In the previous iteration of the program, some smaller groups reported to larger “hub” contractors, which in turn reported to the county, and some just reported directly to the county. The county also did direct administration of rent assistance.

With fewer moving pieces, Janesch said, the new system should create fewer opportunities for people to fall through the cracks.

Janesch said United Way is also working to improve some of the problems applicants cited in past grievances. He said when United Way took over in May, it surveyed tenants and landlords to see what common issues were arising.

“A lot came down to communication and folks feeling like people hadn’t heard back in days or weeks or months,” he said. “Now that we’re the ones running the program, I put a lot of effort into ramping up customer service, so people feel heard and validated and have a better idea of response time.”

United Way had hired 12 people over the past year and a half to work on rental assistance. Janesch said 10 of them specialize in customer service to more quickly respond to applicants’ questions and grievances.

Edmund Witter, managing attorney of the Housing Justice Project, would prefer to see the entire program go in-house at King County rather than be contracted out among nonprofits (a stance he recognizes as ironic, coming from a nonprofit that contracts with King County).

“If we have one government agency that’s in charge, that’s accountable, that is performing consistently across the board by law and constitutional right, we’re going to see a lot more equitable service for tenants,” Witter said.

### **Emergency rental assistance’s future**

King County has about \$40 million in federal rental assistance money left, which is expected to last until middle to late August. There’s hope that the county could get more money from the U.S. Treasury after the

federal government [takes back emergency rental assistance funding](#) from states and counties that haven't yet used it all.

Eventually, though, the federal funding will run out. Advocates and program administrators alike want to keep a King County rental assistance program going in some form after it does, likely administered by United Way and other subcontracted community groups.

There would be no shortage of applicants. Tens of thousands of people sought help through the rental assistance program, but didn't qualify. Some couldn't get their landlord on board or simply weren't chosen in the lottery. Many will face eviction and carry their rental debt without help.

But eviction [was a problem for thousands of low-income renters](#) in King County each year before the pandemic — often for just a [few hundred dollars they owed](#) — and will continue to be after it ends.

“We have suppressed that temporarily through the rental assistance program,” said Flor of the county Department of Community and Health Services. “Now we have the opportunity to not let it restore to those levels of evictions.”

Flor said a future program would likely be much smaller than the one created during the pandemic, because the scale of potential evictions on a weekly basis would be in the hundreds of applicants rather than in the thousands.

How King County will fund a future program is an open question. One potential source is a new [emergency rental assistance program](#) created by the Legislature in 2021. By charging a higher fee for filing real estate recording documents, the state expects to raise \$146 million, \$88 million of which would go toward rental assistance to prevent evictions.

That's \$88 million statewide, meaning King County would get only a small slice of the pie, very little compared with the hundreds of millions it has disbursed during the pandemic.

Still, affordable housing advocates see a role for rental assistance. As does the Washington Multifamily Housing Association, which said it supports the idea of a permanent program.

Washington Low Income Housing Alliance policy director Michelle Thomas noted, however, that spending on rent relief must be balanced with spending on improving baseline conditions for low-income renters.

“If you're responding to an emergency situation and doing it in an environment of not limiting rising rents, you have to ask if this is the most efficient use of resources for housing and homelessness,” she said. “And I think the answer is always no.”

She argued that investing in more affordable housing is less expensive in the long run than responding to the crisis at the point of someone facing eviction. Rent relief proponents similarly argue, however, that providing emergency rent relief to prevent eviction is much less expensive than someone entering the homeless system.

“We need subsidized affordable housing. We need a rental assistance program. And we need more rent regulation,” Thomas said. “Until we do that, the ability to use rental assistance to save people's homes will be overly expensive and serve far too few people.”

### **A not quite fairy-tale ending**

The Housing Justice Project helped Myers reapply for rental assistance, but she didn't have high hopes. In May, she heard back from her case manager: Her second application had been approved and she would be able to stay in her apartment.

	<p>“I’m very grateful. I’m very blessed. I can’t express how happy I am right now,” Myers said. “I stressed morning, evening, night. I haven’t been sleeping. I wake up in the middle of the night worried I’m going to lose my home. Not just for me but my granddaughter, who lives with me. I constantly feared being homeless.”</p> <p>Myers said her apartment is far from a dream situation. She still worries about drug dealers across the street. The building manager is slow about fixing problems with broken appliances, and the water shuts off at random times. But it’s her home and she doesn’t know where she would’ve been able to afford to go if she were evicted.</p> <p>Myers said she’s resilient and unwilling to quit until all options are exhausted. She wants to see King County fix its emergency rental assistance program so that it doesn’t require such resilience.</p> <p>“The stress I’ve been through has probably taken a few years off my life,” Myers said. “I’m the type of person who will keep trying and keep trying until there’s no way to fix it anymore. I’m sure there are people that aren’t like me and just gave up, had to move or got evicted. For people who aren’t stubborn like me, I’m worried about them. That’s really sad.”</p>
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<b>HEADLINE</b>	<b>07/11 Women in Iran rebel against hijab law</b>
<b>SOURCE</b>	<a href="https://www.vice.com/en/article/m7gepv/iran-hijab-law">https://www.vice.com/en/article/m7gepv/iran-hijab-law</a>
<b>GIST</b>	<p>Women across Iran are defying the rule that says they must cover their hair in public, posting videos of themselves removing their hijabs in protest against the country’s hardline president.</p> <p>President Ebrahim Raisi, a cleric supported by the country’s very conservative religious elite, described the recent backlash of mostly young people to the hijab law as “an organised promotion of moral corruption in Islamic society.”</p> <p>The authorities are cracking down on the rebellion and plan to celebrate “Hijab and Chastity” day on Tuesday. The events will include a rally in Azadi Stadium, a large football stadium in Tehran, to encourage women to follow the hijab rule.</p> <p>The Iranian security forces have stepped up their moral policing patrols across Iran to reinforce the strict dress code in recent months, and many women are rebelling against the stricter rules.</p> <p>The law in Iran requires women to wear a head covering, but the restrictions vary from one administration to the next, depending on the political background of the incumbent president.</p> <p>Some regions are more liberal than others, with women in the religious Mashhad and Qom provinces tightly monitored while those in Tehran or Shiraz can often get away without wearing a full head covering.</p> <p>Since Raisi’s victory last year, more restrictive guidance has been introduced, and officials have given directives to refuse “badly veiled” women into government offices, banks, and public transport.</p> <p>Iranian women have followed the Islamic hijab rule for the past four decades, since it was mandated after the Islamic Revolution in 1979. People have found ways around the limitation of the laws to wear colourful fabric and show some of their hair. Religious scholars have long been concerned about this, saying they are breaching the Islamic republic’s principles of “chastity and hijab” guidance.</p> <p>The Imam of Tehran’s Friday prayers, Ayatollah Ahmad Khatami, bashed women who defied the regime’s mandatory hijab laws in his sermon and said, “Stealing, embezzling, and removing hijab are all sins, and by the way, the majority of those unveiled women are either wives or daughters of those thieves.”</p> <p>The country’s ‘fashion police’ units, officially called the Guidance Patrols, have stepped up enforcing the “hijab law” across Iran. The branch has been pictured and filmed by bystanders rounding up women and warning them about their clothing.</p>

	<p>In June, the government introduced two organisations to tackle the “badly veiled” phenomena. A number of incidents circulated on social media showed women contesting the authorities.</p> <p>Campaigns against the regime’s restrictive policies are organised mostly by political activists and dissidents outside of Iran, but young women inside Iran have started to post selfies without the hijab in defiance of increasing pressure from the government.</p> <p>In an incident in Shiraz, a city known for its loose implementation of the dress code, a group of teenage girl and boy skaters gathered, with girls not wearing their headscarves on the 23rd of June. Ten of them were arrested.</p> <p>Iran’s “Hijab and Chastity Day” on Tuesday is designed to tackle the “badly veiled” trend and promote the state-approved dress code.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>07/12 New rapid Covid test identifies variants</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.seattletimes.com/nation-world/new-rapid-covid-test-identifies-variants-researchers-say/">https://www.seattletimes.com/nation-world/new-rapid-covid-test-identifies-variants-researchers-say/</a>
GIST	<p>DALLAS — UT Southwestern researchers have created a rapid COVID-19 test that can identify different variants of the coronavirus in as little as four hours.</p> <p>The researchers hope doctors can use their test, called CoVarScan, to tailor COVID-19 treatments to patients based on which variant the patients have. CoVarScan could also be used to track which variants are cropping up in different communities, and even identify new ones.</p> <p>“It was such a pleasure and, really, an honor to be able to take this skill set, what we have, and build something that has public health utility,” said Andrew Clark, an assistant professor of pathology at UT Southwestern and an author of the study.</p> <p>The research was published in the journal <a href="#">Clinical Chemistry</a> this May.</p> <p>Scanning for a specific variant of the SARS-CoV-2 virus is a bit different from a typical rapid test.</p> <p>Dr. Jeff SoRelle, an assistant professor of pathology at UT Southwestern, said a normal rapid COVID-19 test is a bit like going into a library and asking if they have a specific book. You get a “yes” or “no” answer as to whether that book is there or not.</p> <p>Looking for variants is like reading specific paragraphs in two similar books to figure out whether the books are in their second or third edition. Between editions, words may be added, deleted or changed altogether.</p> <p>Finding out which edition of SARS-CoV-2 someone has is usually done by a process called “whole genome sequencing,” where scientists look at the entire viral sequence — or, read the entire book — to figure out where the differences are.</p> <p>That process can be expensive and take one to four weeks to produce results.</p> <p>CoVarScan works by looking at just eight regions, or hot spots, of the SARS-CoV-2 genetic sequence instead. Each variant looks a little bit different at these hot spots. SoRelle’s team can analyze each of the regions to identify a unique pattern of mutation that’s specific to each variant. They’ve also used CoVarScan to identify different subvariants of omicron.</p> <p>“They create unique signatures, or fingerprints, of mutations,” SoRelle said. “We can really tell the difference between each of them.”</p>

To make sure CoVarScan was getting it right, SoRelle and his team ran just under 4,000 samples from positive COVID-19 nasal swabs through the test. They checked CoVarScan's results against results from whole genome sequencing.

SoRelle and his team found that CoVarScan was highly effective at identifying variants correctly.

What makes CoVarScan unique is its ability to not only detect existing variants, but also detect new variants that have yet to develop.

SoRelle and his team began this research in January 2021, before the delta and omicron variants existed. Once SoRelle and his team know the genetic sequence of a new variant, CoVarScan can look for the variant's unique fingerprint of mutations along with the existing ones.

"We wouldn't necessarily need to change what we do in the testing," SoRelle said. "Just change what we're looking for."

Padmapriya Banada is a research assistant professor at Rutgers University who was not involved with the study. She says CoVarScan's ability to detect future variants as well as current ones is critically important.

Banada said one challenge in making CoVarScan more widespread is that it identifies hot spots using scientific equipment every lab might not have. She says more work will be necessary to implement CoVarScan at places like schools or doctors' offices that might not have such technical equipment on hand.

"It does need some technical expertise," Banada said. "But considering what it offers, it probably overcomes those limitations."

CoVarScan is already provided to anyone who tests positive for COVID-19 at UT Southwestern Medical Center, and SoRelle is working with Dallas County to see if CoVarScan can help hospitals track what variants are most common in their area.

SoRelle has a patent filed for the work and is also developing CoVarScan for commercial use.

He and Clark hope CoVarScan can help hospitals design the best COVID-19 treatments for their patients, both for variants like omicron that we hear about often, and ones that we have yet to encounter.

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HEADLINE	<b>07/11 Omicron mutant BA.2.75 worries scientists</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://time.com/6195495/covid-omicron-variant-mutant-contagious-ba2-75/">https://time.com/6195495/covid-omicron-variant-mutant-contagious-ba2-75/</a>
GIST	<p>he quickly changing coronavirus has spawned yet another super contagious Omicron mutant that's worrying scientists as it gains ground in India and pops up in numerous other countries, including the United States.</p> <p>Scientists say the variant—called BA.2.75—may be able to spread rapidly and get around immunity from vaccines and previous infection. It's unclear whether it could cause more serious disease than other Omicron variants, including the globally prominent BA.5.</p> <p>"It's still really early on for us to draw too many conclusions," said Matthew Binnicker, director of clinical virology at the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota. "But it does look like, especially in India, the rates of transmission are showing kind of that exponential increase." Whether it will outcompete BA.5, he said, is yet to be determined.</p> <p>Still, the fact that it has already been detected in many parts of the world even with lower levels of viral surveillance "is an early indication it is spreading," said Shishi Luo, head of infectious diseases for</p>



Helix, a company that supplies viral sequencing information to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

The latest mutant has been spotted in several distant states in India, and appears to be spreading faster than other variants there, said Lipi Thukral, a scientist at the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research-Institute of Genomics and Integrative Biology in New Delhi. It's also been detected in about 10 other countries, including Australia, Germany, the United Kingdom and Canada. Two cases were recently identified on the West Coast of the U.S., and Helix identified a third U.S. case last week.

Fueling experts' concerns are a large number of mutations separating this new variant from Omicron predecessors. Some of those mutations are in areas that relate to the spike protein and could allow the virus to bind onto cells more efficiently, Binnicker said.

Another concern is that the genetic tweaks may make it easier for the virus to skirt past antibodies—protective proteins made by the body in response to a vaccine or infection from an earlier variant.

But experts say vaccines and boosters are still the best defense against severe COVID-19. In the fall it's likely the U.S. will see updated formulations of the vaccine being developed that target more recent omicron strains.

"Some may say, 'Well, vaccination and boosting hasn't prevented people from getting infected.' And, yes, that is true," he said. "But what we have seen is that the rates of people ending up in the hospital and dying have significantly decreased. As more people have been vaccinated, boosted or naturally infected, we are starting to see the background levels of immunity worldwide creep up."

It may take several weeks to get a sense of whether the latest Omicron mutant may affect the trajectory of the pandemic. Meanwhile Dr Gagandeep Kang, who studies viruses at India's Christian Medical College in Vellore, said the growing concern over the variant underlines the need for more sustained efforts to track and trace viruses that combine genetic efforts with real-world information about who is getting sick and how badly. "It is important that surveillance isn't a start-stop strategy," she said.

Luo said BA.2.75 is another reminder that the coronavirus is continually evolving—and spreading.

"We would like to return to pre-pandemic life, but we still need to be careful," she said. "We need to accept that we're now living with a higher level of risk than we used to."

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HEADLINE	07/12 Day 139 of the Russia invasion
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/jul/12/russia-ukraine-war-update-what-we-know-on-day-139-of-the-invasion">https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/jul/12/russia-ukraine-war-update-what-we-know-on-day-139-of-the-invasion</a>
GIST	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>The death toll from a Russian missile attack on a five-storey apartment building in the town of Chasiv Yar in eastern Ukraine has risen to at least 34.</b> <a href="#">Emergency crews worked to pull people from the rubble.</a> Zelenskiy accused Moscow of deliberately targeting civilians in the attack which destroyed three buildings in a residential quarter. The latest victim, a nine-year-old child, was retrieved from the wreckage on Monday evening, Ukraine's state emergency services said.</li><li>• <b>Ukraine plans to gather a "million-strong" fighting force equipped with western weapons to recapture its southern territory from Russia.</b> Ukraine's president, Volodymyr Zelenskiy, ordered the military <a href="#">to recover occupied areas around the Black Sea coast</a> that are vital to the country's economy, defence minister Oleksii Reznikov said.</li><li>• <b>At least six people died after Russian rocket attacks on Monday morning on Kharkiv in north-east Ukraine, according to Ukraine's prosecutor general's office.</b> <a href="#">Among those killed were a father and his 17-year-old son,</a> who were driving on their way to pick up a certificate for his university admission, Ukrainian regional police official Serhiy Bolvinov said. Mayor Ihor Terekhov said shelling struck civilian infrastructure including a commercial property and a tyre repair shop. These are "places which had no military significance", he added.</li></ul>

- Four people were injured by shelling in the city of **Mykolaiv** on Tuesday morning, according to the city's mayor **Oleksandr Syenkevych**.
- **About 80% of residents in Ukraine's eastern region of Donetsk have fled, its governor said.** Pavlo Kyrylenko said about 340,000 people, or 20% of the local population before Russia's full-scale invasion began on 24 February, remain.
- **Germany and the Czech Republic have signed a joint declaration, pledging to overcome Russian fossil fuel dependency** and to accelerate the transition to low carbon energy. "We are going to finalise the agreement on solidarity measures to safeguard the security of gas supply between our countries prior to the start of the upcoming winter season," the declaration read.
- **Vladimir Putin signed a decree making it easier for citizens of Ukraine to acquire Russian citizenship.** Previously, a simplified procedure applied [only to residents of the self-proclaimed breakaway territories of the Donetsk People's Republic \(DPR\) and Luhansk People's Republic \(LPR\)](#) in eastern Ukraine, as well as the Russian-occupied regions of Kherson and Zaporizhzhia.
- **The Russian president plans to meet with his Turkish counterpart, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, after the pair discussed efforts to facilitate grain exports from Ukraine, according to the Kremlin.** [Erdoğan told Putin that it was time to act on a UN plan](#) to set up a sea corridor for Ukrainian grain exports through the Black Sea during a phone call on Monday, the Turkish state-owned Anadolu news agency said.
- **Lithuania expanded restrictions on trade through its territory to Russia's Kaliningrad exclave, as phase-ins on earlier announced EU sanctions begin.** Goods sanctioned from Monday morning include concrete, wood, alcohol and alcohol-based industrial chemicals. The governor of Kaliningrad, Anton Alikhanov, has [proposed a total ban on the movement of goods between the three Baltic states and Russia](#), in response to what authorities in the exclave have called a "blockade".
- **Canada's ambassador to Ukraine, Larisa Galadza, has been summoned to Kyiv explain Ottawa's decision to return to Germany gas turbines needed to maintain the Nord Stream 1 pipeline.** Canada agreed to send back the repaired turbines at the weekend, angering Ukraine officials who insisted the move breached energy sanctions in place against Russia.
- **Eight foreign-flagged ships have been able to reach ports along the Danube-Black Sea Canal to help Ukraine break a Russia-imposed blockade on grain exports,** according to local media reports. The Kyiv Independent newspaper said the vessels were escorted by the Ukraine navy.
- **Latvia may increase its defence spending and introduce compulsory military service regardless of gender to contain security risks arising from Russia.** President Egils Levits, 67, told Reuters that security is the "priority of our politics today" and plans to raise the defence budget to 2.5% of GDP "may not be enough".
- **The Dutch prime minister, Mark Rutte, met Zelenskiy in Kyiv to reiterate his country's support for Ukraine "now and in the years to come".** [The war in Ukraine may last longer than anyone had hoped](#), Rutte warned during a visit to the capital. After their meeting, Zelenskiy welcomed the "constructive" talks with the Dutch leader and the decision to supply weapons to Ukraine.
- **Iran is planning to supply Russia with [hundreds of weapons-capable drones](#) for use in Ukraine,** according to a top US official. Jake Sullivan, the White House national security adviser, said: "The Iranian government is preparing to provide Russia with up to several hundred UAVs [unmanned aerial vehicles], including weapons-capable UAVs, on an expedited timeline." Sullivan said information suggested that Iran is preparing to train Russian forces to use the UAVs as soon as early July.
- **The lower house of the Russian parliament will gather on 15 July for an extraordinary session** where more than 80 draft laws will be discussed. "We plan to consider a little [more] than 60 issues," Vladimir Vasilyev, the head of the United Russia party, said but did not disclose what the issues were.
- **The United Nations says it will monitor the war in Ukraine for violations against children,** including killings, injuries, recruitment, rape and other forms of sexual violence.

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SOURCE	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/jul/11/ukraine-hopes-to-build-a-million-strong-army-to-retake-lost-territory">https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/jul/11/ukraine-hopes-to-build-a-million-strong-army-to-retake-lost-territory</a>
GIST	<p>Ukraine hopes to assemble a “million strong” army to try to retake territory occupied by Russia, the defence minister, Oleksii Reznikov, said <a href="#">over the weekend</a>. Its forces, he added, had also demonstrated to the US <a href="#">they could make good use</a> of newly acquired longer-range rocket artillery, opening the door to the supply of more.</p> <p>But however impressive sounding the claims were, it is hard to believe <a href="#">Ukraine</a> is yet capable of an effective counteroffensive, even if the much-vaunted US Himars and the British M270 rocket artillery, with their range of 70km to 80km, have begun to arrive and are being put to good use. A turning of the military tide, if it happens at all, will most likely take time.</p> <p>Ukraine has to talk up its prospects. The idea of a counteroffensive “is a hugely popular idea inside Ukraine”, said Orysia Lutsevych, a research fellow at the Chatham House thinktank, and Kyiv needs to convince the west that with sustained help, its military has a realistic chance of kicking the Russians out.</p> <p>The country began the war with a 125,000-strong army plus 100,000 in national and border guards, according to figures from the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) – but says it is lifting that to an army of 700,000 plus 300,000 of the paramilitaries. But if it can assemble that number under arms, a key issue is their quality.</p> <p>The three-month long battle in Donbas so far has cost the defenders many casualties, as Russia switched tactics to artillery bombardment. Various figures have been bandied about, but Ukrainian military intelligence sources recently told experts at the Rusi thinktank that 100 were being killed a day, on average.</p> <p>Add in wounded at 300 or 400 a day, and casualties could amount to about 15,000 a month – perhaps 35,000 to 45,000 in total. A further 7,200 Ukrainian soldiers have gone missing since the start of the war, the country estimated on Monday. Many of these losses will have come from Ukraine’s most experienced forces.</p> <p>The need to enhance the fighting force is well recognised by Ukraine and its western backers. <a href="#">Britain has begun training Ukrainian recruits</a> – 600 are currently receiving a few weeks of basic training around the UK – and there is capacity to train 2,400 at once and 10,000 every 120 days, assuming the UK government sticks to a pledge made by the outgoing prime minister, Boris Johnson.</p> <p>Some of the Ukrainian recruits, aged between 18 and 60, are people who have never fired a gun. This is an army that has to be replenished from scratch. Elementary learning is quick though. Raw recruits at first were only able to hit targets with rifle fire 50% of the time. It rose rapidly to 80%, one British trainer said.</p> <p>Such military training is clearly critical for the Ukrainians, but a successful counteroffensive will require more: a strategic use of a combination of arms, an ability to concentrate force on the chosen battlefield of at least three to one or ideally more (Russia is thought to have managed seven to one in Donbas) and advanced western weapons.</p> <p>Ukraine has lobbied heavily for Nato standard munitions as it gradually runs out of its traditional Soviet-standard supply. The new weapons, however, create fresh problems as experts Jack Watling and Nick Reynolds noted in a comprehensive analysis for Rusi. For example, while Nato forces use 155mm shells, there is no such thing as a single western howitzer: “Nato standardisation is not very standardised,” they wrote.</p> <p>At the same time, the US, the lead weapons supplier, remains cautious in the amount it will provide of critical kit. So far, the initial four Himars truck-mounted rocket artillery has been upped to 12. Nevertheless, as Reznikov mentioned, there are encouraging signs.</p>

On Sunday, the Russian nationalist Igor Girkin warned on his Telegram channel that Russian air defence systems were proving “ineffective against” strikes by Himars missiles, and claimed that over the past five to seven days, “more than 10” ammunition and logistics stores had been hit and “about a dozen” command posts. When will the Russians start “fighting in full force?” Girkin asked.

Ukraine will hope that by striking deeper behind enemy lines, the rocket artillery will disrupt Moscow’s ability to continue its grinding offensive in Donbas.

A key indicator of whether Ukraine can halt the Russians is whether Moscow will be able launch a full offensive against the adjacent Donbas cities of Sloviansk and Kramatorsk, the two largest population centres in Donetsk province that it does not hold. Until now, Russia has been firing about 20,000 shells a day, slowly destroying Sievierodonetsk and other towns and cities in its path.

As for Ukraine, there are key elements in any normal offensive military package still not available to it. Its air power is limited while moves to supply extra Soviet-standard fighter jets advance at glacial speeds. Russian forces have dug in on large parts of the long front, and where Ukraine has made gains, in the south, towards occupied Kherson, they have been modest, reflecting the resources available to it so far.

Ben Barry, a land warfare specialist with the IISS, said: “If the Russian offensive in the Donbas culminates, there will be growing pressure on the Ukrainians to launch a major counterattack. But the longer they have to prepare, to build up training and stockpiles, the more chance it has of succeeding.” Failure, by contrast, could be a political disaster for Kyiv.

Barry highlights Operation Storm, the final winning offensive in Croatia’s war against Serbian separatists in the 1990s. The August 1995 attack was years in the planning, with the Croats receiving training from a US military consultancy, and it ended more than three years of stalemate. “There may be reason why such wars take years not months,” Barry concluded.

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HEADLINE	<b>07/11 Firefighters make headway Yosemite blaze</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.wsj.com/articles/wildfire-at-yosemite-national-park-grows-to-2-000-acres-11657559790?mod=hp_featst_pos3">https://www.wsj.com/articles/wildfire-at-yosemite-national-park-grows-to-2-000-acres-11657559790?mod=hp_featst_pos3</a>
GIST	<p>Firefighters working to protect a grove of giant sequoia trees in Yosemite National Park gained ground Monday.</p> <p>The Washburn Fire, which has burned more than 2,300 acres since sparking July 7, is now 25% contained, according to the National Park Service.</p> <p>The blaze is affecting the southern end of the Northern California park, which includes Mariposa Grove, home to hundreds of mature sequoia trees and Yosemite’s largest collection of giant sequoias. The oldest among them is the Grizzly Giant, which is about 3,000 years old.</p> <p>Hundreds of firefighters are on the scene, with more on the way, targeting the fire from both ground and the air, the park service said.</p> <p>Rugged terrain has complicated efforts to put out the blaze. But it is still manageable, said Stanley Bercovitz, public information officer for the Washburn Fire and California Incident Management Team 13. The relative humidity is low but not so low to alert officials, Mr. Bercovitz said, and winds are less than 10 miles an hour.</p> <p>Crews are removing vegetation along the forest floor and are spraying trees with water to help increase humidity levels. “Fortunately, the Mariposa Grove has a long history of prescribed burning and studies have shown that these efforts reduce the impacts of high-severity unwanted fire,” the park service said. Unlike with some other fires, the sequoias under threat in the current blaze aren’t being wrapped in protective foils.</p>

Residents and visitors within the fire area, which also includes the community of Wawona, Calif., and Wawona Campground, are under mandatory evacuation orders, the park service said. An evacuation shelter was set up at a church in Mariposa, Calif. Other parts of Yosemite remain open.

Jennifer Harper, of Woodland Hills, Calif., has attended family reunions in Yosemite her entire life. This year, the fire cut short the reunion for some of her family. After snapping photos of smoke plumes on Thursday afternoon, Ms. Harper woke up Friday morning to find her Wawona cabin's patio and her car covered with ash. Still, she hesitated to leave.

"I didn't feel too uneasy about it. It still looked like it's far away," she said. "But my family was telling me 'Oh, it's coming over the ridge now.' "

Ms. Harper evacuated Saturday afternoon after receiving an alert on her phone.

It was the first fire she said she could remember that has been so close to where tourists are. She said she decided to skip out on a visit to Mariposa Grove this year because she went last year.

"Now I'm really sad I did," she said. "You just don't know if it's gonna be there next year."

Hot, dry conditions are expected to continue this week, said Andy Bollenbacher, a meteorologist with the National Weather Service's San Joaquin Valley, Calif., office. Though temperatures are forecast to dip slightly Wednesday and Thursday, they will increase again on Friday and Saturday.

Smoke from the fire is making its way toward the San Francisco Bay Area and Sacramento, and is affecting air quality in the region, he said.

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HEADLINE	<b>07/11 Suicide prevention calls: 1-in-6 dropped call</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.wsj.com/articles/one-in-six-calls-to-national-suicide-prevention-lifeline-end-without-reaching-a-counselor-11657531805?mod=lead">https://www.wsj.com/articles/one-in-six-calls-to-national-suicide-prevention-lifeline-end-without-reaching-a-counselor-11657531805?mod=lead</a> feature below a pos1
GIST	<p>Health officials preparing to broaden the reach of a national mental-health crisis line are working to strengthen <a href="#">an overstretched network of call centers</a> that didn't connect with about one in six callers in recent years, a Wall Street Journal data review showed.</p> <p>The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline will transition on July 16 to <a href="#">a three-digit number for calls and texts, 988</a>, from a 10-digit number that has operated since 2005 in coordination with local crisis centers.</p> <p>The line's operators, including the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration and the nonprofit Vibrant Emotional Health, said they expect an increase in calls to the shorter and <a href="#">more memorable 988 number</a> during the next year. Stress, suffering and disruption of routines during the pandemic <a href="#">has worsened many people's mental health</a>, clinicians have said.</p> <p>The network of about 200 call centers that answers calls to the line is already under some strain. Some 1.5 million of 9.2 million calls between 2016 and 2021 were abandoned by callers or disconnected before a counselor could respond, according to data provided by Vibrant and analyzed by the Journal. In 11 states, a majority of calls were routed to one of 13 national backup centers from local centers too overtaxed to answer.</p> <p>Calls are first routed to local crisis centers based on area code and forwarded to national backup centers if no one is available. Answering locally is preferable, officials said.</p> <p>"We have knowledge of who's in the county, who might take their insurance, who isn't taking new patients right now," said Sam Johnson, director of behavioral health for the health department in Lake County, Ill., which runs a two-person call center.</p>



Almost three in four calls in Illinois were routed out-of-state from 2016 to 2021, the highest of any state, the Vibrant data show. Nationally, just under 65% of calls to the crisis line were answered in-state in that period.

The Illinois Department of Human Services said a recently opened center will help answer more calls locally. Backed by federal and state funds, the center will have about 100 people answering calls from across the state in addition to centers that serve certain counties, said a department spokesman.

Nationally, some \$432 million in federal funding and additional state funding to improve the crisis line will help to cut response times and answer more calls in-state after the 988 number goes live, public-health officials and mental-health advocates said. SAMHSA said that the crisis line was underfunded in the past and that recent investments have already improved wait times and the number of calls and texts answered.

“Is there readiness across the country for 988 to go live and provide the kind of response people want and deserve? No,” said Angela Kimball, an executive at Inseparable, a mental-health advocacy organization. “But are we making progress? Yes, we definitely are.”

The suicide rate in the U.S. increased by 30% from 2000 to 2020, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. And while overall rates have declined from a 2018 peak, [suicides among groups including children have risen](#) in recent years, CDC data show. The crisis line has helped make [people feel less suicidal and hopeless](#), some studies have suggested; some people said calling saved their life.

[Annual call volumes to the current 10-digit line](#) increased by 92% from 2016 to 2021. In Louisiana, the in-state answer rate of calls to the crisis line dropped to 47% in 2021 from 91% six years earlier. “Our call volume was so great that we had to back off a lot of our calls and send them back to the backup centers,” said LaVondra Dobbs, chief executive officer of VIA Link, a crisis center in Louisiana.

Storm Glassheart, 25 years old, said she called the national crisis line as a last resort in 2018 after trying two local crisis lines in Arizona. She said she waited on hold for hours. Then, she said, the call disconnected.

“I followed all the steps. Like, nothing is working,” Ms. Glassheart recalled thinking. “So that must mean that I should die.” She said she tried to kill herself and woke up the next day in a hospital after a friend found her passed out.

Arizona had the highest in-state answer rate from 2016 to 2021, answering 92% of calls to its crisis centers. Ms. Glassheart’s case appeared to be an anomaly, said Andrew Erwin, chief operating officer at Solari, one of the state’s two crisis centers.

“I’ve never heard of anyone waiting that amount of time unless there was a technical problem within the system,” he said. “We want people to call in for anything and everything related to behavioral health, so that they know that there’s one line where they can get that support.”

About 80% of callers to the national crisis line who hang up do so after waiting two minutes or less, according to Vibrant, and the average speed of answer is 45 seconds. The centers and counselors do the best they can with limited resources, said John Draper, Vibrant’s vice president of national networks.

“We should see some differences in those numbers with more resources going forward,” Dr. Draper said.

Georgia has invested more than \$20 million in preparation for the 988 launch, including staffing and technology to cut the time it takes to answer calls to the crisis line to fewer than 30 seconds, said Judy Fitzgerald, commissioner of the Georgia Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities. “If people are in crisis, they need an answer pretty quickly,” Ms. Fitzgerald said.

	<p>The 10-digit number will remain active after 988 goes live, officials said. The Samaritans crisis center in Massachusetts is still looking to hire people to add to its existing 13 staff answering calls and some 240 volunteers. Recruiting and retaining staff can be a challenge, said Chief Clinical Officer Kacy Maitland. The center receives about 300 calls a day, and the highest need is between 11 p.m. and 3 a.m. A federal website maintains <a href="#">a searchable list of 988-related job openings</a> and volunteer opportunities across the country.</p> <p>“The more people willing to help, the better,” Ms. Maitland said.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>07/11 Omicron subvariants rapidly across Europe</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.wsj.com/articles/omicron-strains-drive-new-covid-wave-in-europe-as-measures-fall-away-11657552364?mod=hp_listb_pos1">https://www.wsj.com/articles/omicron-strains-drive-new-covid-wave-in-europe-as-measures-fall-away-11657552364?mod=hp_listb_pos1</a>
GIST	<p>BRUSSELS—A Covid-19 infection wave driven by two hyper-infectious <a href="#">Omicron</a> subvariants is moving rapidly across Europe, leading to an uptick in cases and hospitalizations in countries that have dropped the majority of preventive measures against the virus ahead of the summer months.</p> <p>European governments have <a href="#">discarded many Covid-19 mitigation strategies</a> like mask mandates, mass testing and so-called Covid passports as their focus shifts to economic recovery and the <a href="#">war in Ukraine</a>. A recent survey by McKinsey shows that fewer than 12% of the public in Germany, France, the U.K., Italy and Spain count the pandemic as a primary concern.</p> <p>Scientists don’t expect that the wave of infections will lead to the <a href="#">high death tolls seen before vaccine rollouts</a>. But they are concerned that public and national health systems are ill-prepared for fall and winter waves that some predict could see double the current infection figures.</p> <p>“We’re going to have a health-service meltdown” in the fall, said Tim Spector, an epidemiologist at King’s College London.</p> <p>The World Health Organization is urging government action at a time when many want to see the pandemic behind them.</p> <p>“For us to become complacent this far into a pandemic, when we have so many tools that actually work—we really need to fight against that,” Maria van Kerkhove, the Covid-19 technical lead at the WHO, said last month.</p> <p>“And without testing, without sequencing, without these public-health measures in place, we’re really playing with fire because we know that this virus continues to evolve,” she said.</p> <p>The 14-day case rate was up 28% last week to 921 Covid-19 cases per 100,000 people across the European Union and the European Economic Area. Infections among those over 65 years were up nearly 32%, though deaths overall declined in most countries.</p> <p>EU governments extended the bloc’s digital Covid-19 certificate, or Covid passport, late last month, but most countries have already dropped testing requirements for incoming travelers and no longer require negative tests or vaccinations to access basic services, schools, bars, restaurants or workplaces.</p> <p>At the same time, European governments are collecting and publishing data less frequently. The British government recently pulled its funding from the ZOE Health Study, a major Covid-19 study led by Dr. Spector. The European Centre for Disease Control and Prevention (ECDC), an EU agency, no longer publishes daily bulletins of Covid-19 data.</p> <p>National governments “need to collect data, because only if there is good data...can we make policies for the future,” said Soumya Swaminathan, Chief Scientist at the WHO. But “the data is not coming out,” she added.</p>

Public-health experts across Europe are frustrated at what they judge to be the lack of concerted response from governments.

“This isn’t the end of the world because we have vaccines, we have things we can do about it. But frankly we aren’t doing those things,” said Stephen Griffin, a virologist at the University of Leeds in England. “We have switched the lights off and are hoping [Covid] just goes away. But it really won’t.”

As life has returned to a sense of prepandemic normal in Europe, two subvariants of Omicron, BA.4 and BA.5, are driving a surge in cases. First detected in South Africa at the start of 2022, the strains are more contagious than previous versions of Omicron, BA.1 and BA.2. At the [peak of the Omicron wave last winter](#), more than 2,000 Americans on average were dying each day after contracting Covid.

Existing vaccines remain effective against BA.4 and BA.5 in preventing serious illness, scientists say. They and immunity from initial waves of Omicron will protect most from the worst symptoms. “The vaccine will always work, for all the variants. It’s just the matter of the level, of how much it works,” said Meng Yuan, a scientist at Scripps Research in California.

A mutation found in BA.4 and BA.5, but not in previous Omicron subvariants, “makes the immune response elicited by the vaccine a little bit less effective against the new variants,” said Mr. Yuan, who recently co-wrote an article on recent Omicron strains in the journal of the National Academy of Sciences.

The combination of the virus’s changing nature and relaxed restrictions on movement and required testing are leading to the uptick in cases across Europe, public-health experts say.

In France, 900,000 people have tested positive for Covid-19 within the past week, the highest number in the EU, according to data from Johns Hopkins University. The BA.5 strain accounts for 67% of the new cases there, while 7% are the BA.4 strain, according to the French Health Ministry.

About 80% of France’s population is vaccinated, but only a quarter of those between 60 and 79 years old and just under a third of those aged 80 and over have had a second booster shot, and among nursing home residents 42% have done so.

As cases go up, hospitalizations are also on the rise in several European countries.

In England, the seven-day average for hospitalizations is up 31% week over week. Bed occupancy with Covid-19 is above 12,000 patients, according to the Covid-19 Actuaries Response Group, which tracks Covid data in the UK. About a third of those patients have been hospitalized primarily because of Covid, the group said.

“We’re seeing huge amounts of reinfection and an increase in hospitalization. It’s troubling that we’re allowing repeat infections to continue and not do[ing] anything about it,” said Dr. Griffin of the University of Leeds.

Germany, which instituted a gradual reopening this year using a tiered vaccination system to enter movie theaters, restaurants and other public spaces, is now battling an exponential spike in infections.

Over 500,000 people tested positive for Covid-19 in Germany over the past seven days, and the incidence rate has reached 661 cases per 100,000 people, according to the Robert Koch Institute, a German health agency. Over 100 new patients have been admitted to intensive-care units a day in the past week.

Doctors in Germany say many patients are going to the hospital for other ailments and testing positive for Covid-19 upon arrival, putting an additional strain on hospital systems and overworked staff, who must isolate each Covid-infected person regardless of the severity of their symptoms. This can lead to life-threatening delays for other patients, doctors warn.

	<p>“If you have a tumor and have to wait an extra two weeks to get the operation, I think we are not doing good medicine anymore,” said Jan Rupp, a doctor at the University Medical Center Schleswig-Holstein, a hospital system in Germany’s northernmost federal state, which has one of the highest Covid-19 incidence rates in the country.</p> <p>Roughly 400-500 medical personnel, mostly front-line doctors and nurses, couldn’t go to work last week due to recent positive Covid-19 results, Dr. Rupp said. The hospital system has roughly 10,000 employees.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>07/11 Medical debt wiped off credit reports</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.wsj.com/articles/about-70-of-medical-debt-is-being-wiped-off-credit-reports-what-that-means-for-you-11657537200?mod=hp_listc_pos4">https://www.wsj.com/articles/about-70-of-medical-debt-is-being-wiped-off-credit-reports-what-that-means-for-you-11657537200?mod=hp_listc_pos4</a>
GIST	<p>Millions of Americans will now see a cleaner bill of health on their credit reports, making it easier for many to get an apartment or apply for a loan.</p> <p>Effective July 1, the three major credit reporting bureaus have removed medical debts that <a href="#">went into collection but were subsequently paid</a>. In the past, these types of debts would remain on reports for as long as seven years.</p> <p>More changes are coming too. Beginning next year, credit reports will also be stripped of all unpaid medical debts up to \$500. The two changes combined should scrub 70% of the approximately \$88 billion in medical debt that currently shows up on the credit reports of 43 million Americans, according to the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau.</p> <p>Removing these blemishes should help some people when getting credit checks by landlords, employers, or when applying for loans, consumer advocates said. Some people could see a modest boost to their credit score, and others will benefit merely from having traces of the past debts deleted.</p> <p><a href="#">Equifax</a>, <a href="#">Experian</a> PLC and <a href="#">TransUnion</a>, the biggest credit-reporting firms, <a href="#">announced these changes</a> to reporting practices in March, a month after a report from the CFPB suggested it would look into “whether policies should be implemented to eliminate unpaid medical billing data on credit reports altogether.”</p> <p>Though unpaid medical bills account for 58% of all debt in third-party collection, according to the CFPB, the agency’s research has found it isn’t a very good predictor of overall creditworthiness. FICO, which powers the most widely used credit scores, also found that paid medical collections are even less predictive of a person’s ability to repay than unpaid medical collections.</p> <p>“We’re questioning whether these are put on by bill collectors as a coercive measure to sort of put a black mark on a consumer’s credit report to force them to pay a bill that they might not even know of,” said John McNamara, assistant director for consumer credit, payments and deposits markets at CFPB.</p> <p>Including these small debts in credit reports often prompts consumers to just pay them off to avoid having them show up when buying a car or a home, even though the debt might be inaccurate, Mr. McNamara said.</p> <p>Consumer advocates say these improvements won’t address those burdened with larger medical debt. About 16 million American adults owe more than \$1,000 in medical debt and three million owe more than \$10,000, according to a report by the Kaiser Family Foundation.</p> <p>Removing the paid medical debt from credit reports won’t impact all credit scores. It largely depends on which scoring system is used, according to the CFPB.</p> <p>In 2014, FICO <a href="#">updated its latest scoring model</a>, FICO 9, to exclude paid medical debt, but many lenders still rely on FICO 8. For people who only had medical debt in collection, the median increase in their</p>

credit scores from switching to FICO 9 was approximately 25 points, enough to make an impact on credit decisions, the company said.

Still, many employers, landlords and creditors don't just use the score. They look at the raw report, which can show that an individual had a medical debt in collections even if the balance is now zero, according to Mr. McNamara. Therefore, having these traces of medical debts erased can help beyond improving credit scores.

Additionally, it can take months for an individual to find out the final amount of a medical bill after waiting for the insurance companies to pay their part. This can lead to hospitals sending bills in the process of being paid to collections, according to Mark Rukavina of Community Catalyst, a consumer advocacy group.

To address those timing concerns, the bureaus also doubled the grace period before unpaid medical debts land on credit reports from six to 12 months, giving individuals and insurers more room to settle payments, or in some cases, dispute the bills.

Mary Kester, 31, had an emergency cyst removal three years ago while she was working as a flight attendant. Her health insurance from Colorado, where she originally lived, didn't cover the operation that cost almost \$15,000 at a hospital in Florida. Ms. Kester [applied for financial assistance](#) for the hospital bill and was denied, which resulted in the bill going to collection in less than six months.

"Around the time it happened, I was trying to apply for new credit cards, and I was getting denied," Ms. Kester said. "No matter what I do with my credit cards or my student loan debts, [the medical debt] is stopping me from increasing my credit score."

Medical debt is different from mortgages and car loans, because hospital bills aren't immediately given to patients at the time of treatment and patients in emergency situations aren't able to choose healthcare based on pricing. "Usually, when you are going in, it's because you have some acute need," said Marceline White, executive director of Maryland Consumer Rights Coalition.

Consumers can check to make sure the debts were stripped from their credit reports by [reviewing them at annualcreditreport.com](#).

Between June 2020 and June 2022, CFPB received more than 19,000 complaints concerning medical debt collections. Over 9,000 of those were for attempts to collect debt that wasn't owed due to various reasons including debt in collections being already paid by insurance companies or individuals.

The CFPB has found that collectors often have so little faith in the accuracy of their data that they will delete debts from their systems as soon as consumers question the accuracy of the bill, Mr. McNamara said.

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HEADLINE	<b>07/11 Seattle Fire understaffed 69% of time</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://mynorthwest.com/3556344/rantz-seattle-fire-king-county-jail-covid-staffing/">https://mynorthwest.com/3556344/rantz-seattle-fire-king-county-jail-covid-staffing/</a>
GIST	<p>According to internal documents obtained by the Jason Rantz Show on KTTH, the Seattle Fire Department (SFD) was understaffed 69% of the time in 2022. It spent over \$11 million to fund overtime to cover the vacancies.</p> <p>Under then-Seattle Mayor Jenny Durkan and King County Executive Dow Constantine, city and county workers were forced into COVID vaccines. Mayor Bruce Harrell continued the policy. Despite universal understanding that none of the vaccines stop the spread of COVID, neither Harrell nor Constantine have relented on the mandates. Consequently, the staffing crises hitting the city and county on several fronts continue to wreak havoc.</p>



### **Seattle Fire staffing is dangerously understaffed**

SFD Chief Harold Scoggins explained to staff in June that through the first half of the year, the department had only been fully staffed a quarter of the time. It is a dramatic change from 2021.

According to internal documents, Scoggins reported 2021 staffing as 50.41% (184) days fully staffed and 49.59% (181) days not fully staffed.

In 2022, that number jumped dramatically.

Through June, the SFD was fully staffed only 31% (50) of the time, and not fully staffed 69% of the time (108 days). This disparity between 69% and the slide is that stat was through June 11, and the new stat accounts for all of June.

This equates to 486 total units browned out this year, compared to 176 total units offline last year at this time.

When the SFD is not fully staffed, units are “browned out” — meaning it takes units offline from service. Consequently, the SFD has fewer medical, aid, and fire units to serve the city.

January (130 units offline), April (122), and May (90) saw the most brownouts of the year so far. February (69) and March (65) saw the fewest unstaffed units. Though the slide says otherwise, the SFD confirmed the month saw 94 browned out units.

Rather than address the crisis, firefighters have complained Scoggins is focused on the wrong issues. They have complained to the Jason Rantz Show on KTTH of a recent [memo banning the use of the term “brown out”](#) under the claim that it’s racist and caused community outcry. But there was only one contrived complaint by a member of the community.

### **Harrell and Constantine won’t change COVID vaccine mandate**

Neither Harrell nor Constantine plans to change their COVID vaccine mandates, despite knowing it does nothing to stop the spread of COVID.

While data indicates vaccinated individuals are less likely to experience serious complications when infected, nearly half of the state’s COVID cases come from vaccinated individuals. Still, a spokesperson for Constantine says it’s worth keeping in place.

“Hi Jason – As you know, the best tools to fight both infection and severe symptoms of COVID are the vaccines. The latest data from Public Health shows that being vaccinated does indeed reduce risk of infection and importantly reduces the risk of hospitalization and death by around 10x. Being vaccinated means our workforce is better protected against the virus, and protected against being sidelined with severe illness,” spokesperson Chase Gallagher tells the Jason Rantz Show on KTTH.

“It would be irresponsible to characterize staffing issues (which certainly have impacted organizations of many sizes, both public and private) as solely attributed to that policy,” Gallagher said.

Both Harrell and Constantine have recently stated their commitment to the right to choose medical decisions involving one’s own body. But that [commitment only extends to abortion services for women](#), not vaccination decisions.

Harrell’s office did not respond to a request for comment, a common practice from his spokesperson Jamie Housen.

### **The Seattle Fire spent \$11 million in overtime**

It’s certainly true that the COVID vaccine mandate isn’t the sole reason for the crisis, but the COVID firings clearly took a toll on SFD and corrections officers.

	<p>SFD officially separated from 22 firefighters, but there is a large number of sidelined, unvaccinated firefighters who have not been officially terminated yet. Others took retirement early. It's why the department has roughly 110 openings for uniformed staff.</p> <p>The International Association of Firefighters Local 27 believes that, under the current recruitment trajectory, the crisis will not end for another 12-18 months. And the staffing shortage is costing the city.</p> <p>The department confirms to the Jason Rantz Show on KTTH that firefighters have worked 151,250 overtime hours through June 7, equating to an astonishing \$11,001,747 in overtime costs.</p> <p>"The department acknowledges the current number of firefighter vacancies is higher than we would normally carry this time of year and not ideal," a spokesperson for SFD explained to the Jason Rantz Show on KTTH. "We have been taking steps to hire larger recruit classes to help reduce the vacancy count. We want to thank our firefighters who are working additional shifts to ensure each station remains staffed."</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>07/12 UN to investigate children's deaths Ukraine</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/07/12/world/russia-ukraine-war-news#the-un-will-investigate-deaths-of-children-in-ukraine">https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/07/12/world/russia-ukraine-war-news#the-un-will-investigate-deaths-of-children-in-ukraine</a>
GIST	<p>The United Nations will investigate the deaths of children caused by the war in Ukraine, said the U.N. secretary general, António Guterres, adding to the growing global condemnation of Russia's war and its attacks on civilians.</p> <p>Mr. Guterres made the announcement on Monday in his annual <a href="#">"Children and Armed Conflict" report</a>, the first time Ukraine was included in the report.</p> <p>"In view of the ongoing war in Ukraine, including violations against civilians, including children, because of the high intensity of this conflict, this situation will be added as a situation of concern with immediate effect and will be included in my next report," he wrote.</p> <p>Russia's indiscriminate targeting of civilian areas has taken the lives of Ukrainians of all ages. The Ukrainian prosecutor general's office reported in June that <a href="#">313 children had been killed during the war</a> so far. And the U.N. agency for the protection of children in emergency situations has estimated that <a href="#">at least three children have died each day</a> since the war started in February.</p> <p>The U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights estimated that <a href="#">4,509 civilians had been</a> killed by June. The current toll is thought to be much larger, according to Ukraine's chief of police. In March alone in Mariupol, Russian forces bombed a <a href="#">theater</a>, gunned down civilians waiting in line for bread and struck <a href="#">a maternity hospital</a>.</p> <p>World leaders have pledged to hold President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia responsible for war crimes, including civilian slayings. Hundreds of international experts, investigators and prosecutors are collecting evidence to <a href="#">prosecute Russia</a>. According to Ukraine's chief war crimes prosecutor, Yuriy Belousov, most of Ukraine's 8,300 prosecutors are now wholly devoted to investigating these crimes.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>07/12 Russia strikes brings terror to Ukraine east</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/07/12/world/russia-ukraine-war-news#a-hail-of-russian-strikes-brings-terror-to-ukraines-east">https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/07/12/world/russia-ukraine-war-news#a-hail-of-russian-strikes-brings-terror-to-ukraines-east</a>
GIST	<p>Russian strikes killed at least eight people in eastern Ukraine in 24 hours and the death toll from an apartment complex hit by Russian rockets grew as well, local officials said on Monday, a chilling reminder of the devastation Russia has inflicted on civilians, even as its military pauses its drive to seize Ukrainian territory.</p>

While the Russian military regroupes and resupplies, its attacks on civilian targets and morale have intensified in recent days. In one town after another in eastern Ukraine, a hail of seemingly random Russian strikes, delivered by warplanes, artillery and missiles, has killed, maimed and terrified residents.

The attacks have ramped up in particular in Donetsk, an eastern province increasingly in Moscow's cross-hairs after Russian forces [seized the last major city](#) in neighboring Luhansk Province this month.

In the town of Chasiv Yar, in eastern Ukraine, emergency crews were still finding bodies on Monday from a single attack over the weekend. A missile strike hit an apartment complex late Saturday, and the death toll rose to 30 people killed, the [Ukrainian State Emergency Service said](#). Nine people had been pulled from the rubble and rescued so far, it said.

In eastern Donetsk province, which includes Chasiv Yar, at least 10 cities and towns were hit, bringing the civilian death toll in the province to nearly 600 since Russia invaded Ukraine in February, according to the region's military governor, Pavlo Kyrylenko.

Russian forces have used a lull in their ground offensive to help recover, in line with President Vladimir V. Putin's [order](#) last week that some troops rest after the capture of Luhansk Province, military analysts said on Monday. But behind the front lines the rain of devastation continues, and many residents expect that it is a mere overture to a renewed, all-out assault.

Ukrainian and Western analysts expect that Mr. Putin will order a new offensive to conquer the remaining Ukrainian-held territory in Donetsk, anchored by the cities of Sloviansk, Kramatorsk and Bakhmut — if not more.

And on Monday, Russia signaled it might be seeking to establish permanent control of the Ukrainian territories now occupied by Moscow's forces: Mr. Putin [signed a decree](#) that offered a simplified path to Russian citizenship for all Ukrainians.

About nine miles from Chasiv Yar, in the city of Bakhmut, officials said that on Sunday, Russian troops had fired incendiary munitions, limited by international law and designed to set fires or cause burn injuries, in one neighborhood. Bakhmut, an important military stronghold for Ukraine, is less than 10 miles from Russian lines and a likely target for its planned advance through the eastern Donbas region.

Neighbors in shorts and sandals frantically pulled garden hoses toward a burning house. They hurled buckets of water at the flames as the rafters and tiled roof of a house cracked and popped. "I worked 20 years down the mines and this is what I get," said a retired miner, Viktor, 67, watching and weeping.

Russia launched attacks in the northeast as well.

In the north, at about 3:40 a.m. on Monday, a Russian missile destroyed a school building in the Slobidske district of Kharkiv, Ukraine's second largest city, though no one was hurt, Oleh Sinchubov, the head of the Kharkiv regional administration, said on the Telegram messaging app. He said a six-story apartment building in the city was hit 20 minutes later. Emergency workers rescued an 86-year-old woman from the rubble.

"Only civilian structures — a shopping center and houses of peaceful Kharkiv residents — came under the fire of the Russians," Mr. Sinchubov said.

The recent attacks appeared to differ, military analysts said, from Russia's earlier tactics in the war, such as its failed blitzkrieg on Ukraine's capital, Kyiv, and then its concentrated, weeklong bombardment of major regional cities. The latest attacks hit a variety of targets without a corresponding attempt to advance inch by inch.

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SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/07/12/world/russia-ukraine-war-news#latvia-reinstates-military-conscription-amid-alarm-over-russian-aggression">https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/07/12/world/russia-ukraine-war-news#latvia-reinstates-military-conscription-amid-alarm-over-russian-aggression</a>
GIST	<p>Latvia is reinstating compulsory military service, its defense ministry said Monday, a move underscoring how Russia's invasion of Ukraine has fanned alarm in nearby countries and altered Europe's security calculus.</p> <p>Latvia, a small Baltic nation of about two million people, scrapped military conscription in 2007. But the defense ministry, saying that the war had changed its defense considerations, announced that conscription of men ages 18 to 27 would be phased in over five years.</p> <p>The "security implications of the Russia-Ukraine war have led to numerous new challenges," Artis Pabriks, the country's defense minister, said in a statement. "To overcome them, we need to boost our combat capabilities."</p> <p>Latvia's decision to reinstate military conscription comes after <a href="#">Finland and Sweden</a> decided to abandon decades of neutrality and apply to join NATO, underlining how President Vladimir V. Putin's invasion of Ukraine has served to unite and reinforce European defenses.</p> <p>The implications of the war have been felt acutely in the Baltic states of Latvia, Estonia and Lithuania, three former Soviet republics where fears have grown that Mr. Putin is seeking to turn the clock back and reclaim Russia's lost sphere of influence.</p> <p>The Baltic states are all members of the European Union and NATO today, but memories of Russian subjugation run deep in the countries, which were extinguished as independent nations by Stalin in 1940 and incorporated at gunpoint into the Soviet Union.</p> <p>Both Lithuania and Estonia already have mandatory military service. Since the invasion, all three Baltic States have pressed NATO for larger permanent deployments in the region.</p> <p>Latvia and Estonia border Russia. Kaliningrad, a Russian enclave, is sandwiched between Lithuania and Poland. The countries each have sizable Russian-speaking minorities. During the Soviet years, tens of thousands of Latvians fled the country or were deported, while Russians <a href="#">were sent to the country by Moscow</a>.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>07/11 Pandemic kept many children less active</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/07/11/world/covid-19-mandates-vaccine-cases?name=stylncoronavirus&amp;region=hub&amp;block=storyline_live_updates_block_recirc&amp;action=click&amp;pgtype=LegacyCollection#&amp;cid=coronavirus&amp;region=hub&amp;block=storyline_live_updates_block_recirc&amp;action=click&amp;pgtype=LegacyCollection#&amp;cid=covid-pandemic-children-exercise">https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/07/11/world/covid-19-mandates-vaccine-cases?name=stylncoronavirus&amp;region=hub&amp;block=storyline_live_updates_block_recirc&amp;action=click&amp;pgtype=LegacyCollection#&amp;cid=covid-pandemic-children-exercise</a>
GIST	<p>As children around the world stayed home, studied remotely and became more socially isolated during the coronavirus pandemic, they also became less physically active, according to <a href="#">a new review of almost two dozen studies</a> that was published Monday in the medical journal JAMA Pediatrics.</p> <p>The pandemic led to children's daily physical activity declining by 20 percent, according to the review, which analyzed the results of 22 studies published in English that compared activity before and during the pandemic.</p> <p>The review included studies published between January 2020 and January 2022, with a total of more than 14,000 participants under the age of 18 around the world. (It did not include any samples from Africa.) The studies revealed an average decrease of 17 minutes a day in children's "moderate-to-vigorous physical activity" during the pandemic.</p> <p>The decline in physical activity was tied to Covid-19 restrictions that included social distancing, disrupted school schedules and remote learning, as well as an increase in children's sedentary screen time, researchers said.</p>

	<p>“Major outlets for accessing physical activity (sports clubs, swimming pools, gyms, community centers) were closed, canceled, or repeatedly interrupted,” the study stated, adding that school closures meant children were no longer participating in physical education classes, and that many playgrounds and other outdoor play spaces were also closed because of the pandemic.</p> <p>The analysis found that young children with “consistent access and permission to use outdoor spaces” during the pandemic had better physical activity outcomes than others.</p> <p>“These children exhibited smaller reductions in moderate-to-vigorous physical activity and were approximately two times more likely to meet physical activity guidelines during Covid-19,” the researchers said.</p> <p>The review’s findings “underscore the need to provide bolstered access to support and resources related to physical activity to ensure good health and social functioning among children and adolescents during pandemic recovery efforts,” the researchers concluded.</p> <p>They added that “children’s movement behaviors should be at the forefront of pandemic.”</p> <p>A decrease in physical activity can affect children’s mental health as well as their physical health, said Dr. Sandro Galea, dean of the Boston University School of Public Health, who was not involved in the review. “We know that there was an increase in depression in children and adolescents, which in and of itself is likely associated with less physical activity,” he said.</p> <p>He added that school lockdowns and societal restrictions “all may have had a greater impact on activity of children and adolescents than of adults, given young people’s greater reliance on out-of-the-house places for their physical activity.”</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>07/11 EU officials: 2<sup>nd</sup> booster shot 60 and older</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/07/11/world/covid-19-mandates-vaccine-cases?name=stylncoronavirus&amp;region=hub&amp;block=storyline_live_updates_block_recirc&amp;action=click&amp;pgtype=LegacyCollection#europe-second-covid-booster">https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/07/11/world/covid-19-mandates-vaccine-cases?name=stylncoronavirus&amp;region=hub&amp;block=storyline_live_updates_block_recirc&amp;action=click&amp;pgtype=LegacyCollection#europe-second-covid-booster</a>
GIST	<p>European Union health agencies recommended on Monday that people ages 60 and older receive a second booster shot of a coronavirus vaccine, as fears rise over mounting cases and hospitalizations across the continent.</p> <p>The recommendation came days after <a href="#">the World Health Organization said that Europe was at the center of a new virus wave</a>. The European Center for Disease Prevention and Control, which had warned last week that virus infections, hospital admissions and deaths were all expected to rise across Europe, <a href="#">said on Monday</a> that increasing infections among older age groups were already leading to higher rates of severe disease.</p> <p>Those trends in several countries are “mainly driven by the <a href="#">BA.5 sublineage of Omicron</a>,” said Dr. Andrea Ammon, the E.C.D.C.’s director.</p> <p>“This signals the start of a new, widespread Covid-19 wave across the European Union,” Dr. Ammon said, adding that giving booster shots to older people and other at-risk groups was necessary to avert a significant number of hospitalizations and deaths.</p> <p>Although more than half of the countries in Europe’s single market are already administering second booster shots, the uptake remains low and uneven across countries, <a href="#">according to data from the E.C.D.C.</a> The center approves drugs and makes recommendations, but individual European countries set their own policies.</p>



	<p>As part of its announcement on Monday, E.U. health authorities also recommended that people with “medical conditions putting them at high risk of severe disease” receive a second booster. The authorities did not immediately respond to requests for comment on Monday clarifying which medical conditions qualified.</p> <p><a href="#">In April</a>, they recommended that those ages 80 and older be considered for a second booster, <a href="#">but said it was “too early” to do so</a> for the general population.</p> <p>On Monday, E.C.D.C. said that those 60 and older, as well as people with at-risk medical conditions, should receive a second booster at least four months after the previous one, “with a focus on people who have received a previous booster more than six months ago.” The agency stopped short of recommending the shots for healthy people younger than 60, citing a lack of clear evidence to justify the move.</p> <p>With cases rising, Stella Kyriakides, the European Commissioner for Health and Food Safety, said: “I urge everybody to get vaccinated and boosted as quickly as possible. There is no time to lose.”</p> <p>E.U. health officials said that while only currently authorized vaccines should be used for second boosters, work continues to adapt existing vaccines to fight the Omicron variants driving the new wave of cases.</p> <p>“We are working toward possible approvals of adapted vaccines in September,” said the European Medicines Agency’s executive director, Emer Cooke, adding that the health authorities were already reviewing data for two adapted vaccines.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>07/11 China cities impose partial lockdowns</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/07/11/world/covid-19-mandates-vaccine-cases?name=stylIn-coronavirus&amp;region=hub&amp;block=storyline_live_updates_block_recirc&amp;action=click&amp;pgtype=LegacyCollection#china-shutdown-macau-casino">https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/07/11/world/covid-19-mandates-vaccine-cases?name=stylIn-coronavirus&amp;region=hub&amp;block=storyline_live_updates_block_recirc&amp;action=click&amp;pgtype=LegacyCollection#china-shutdown-macau-casino</a>
GIST	<p>At least three Chinese cities put in place partial lockdowns and the gambling hub of Macau shut its casinos for the second time since the start of the pandemic, as authorities tried to stamp out the latest coronavirus outbreaks.</p> <p>In mainland China, the cities of Xi’an, Lanzhou and Haikou imposed partial lockdowns, closing nonessential businesses and enforcing mass testing, setting restrictions on several million residents.</p> <p>In Macau, a semiautonomous Chinese city, authorities also closed nonessential businesses, including its 42 casinos, which are the main drivers of the city’s economy, and asked residents to stay home except to buy food.</p> <p>The latest measures follow a two-month citywide lockdown in Shanghai and limited restrictions in Beijing earlier this year as China dealt with its biggest outbreak of the virus. New cases have emerged in Shanghai barely a month after a citywide lockdown was lifted, prompting officials to order many residents to undergo testing, a possible precursor to more severe restrictions.</p> <p>China’s <a href="#">blunt strategy to eliminate the disease</a> wherever it pops up comes with economic and social consequences. It means locking down apartment blocks, neighborhoods or even whole cities for days or weeks to stamp out even handfuls of cases. And it has led to a significant slowdown in economic growth, which has been felt globally with the disruption of supply chains.</p> <p>Macau’s 680,000 residents have been relatively sheltered from the virus. It has reported <a href="#">two deaths and fewer than 2,000 confirmed cases</a> since the start of the pandemic in 2020, according to government data.</p> <p>The government had already closed parts of the city in recent weeks, along with banks, government buildings, parks and swimming pools. All residents had to undergo rounds of mandatory testing.</p>

	<p>But until now, Macau had avoided shutting down the casinos, which were last closed in February 2020, for 15 days, because of the economic impact. Shares in the companies that run the casinos tumbled on Monday.</p> <p>On Sunday, a health official in Shanghai said that the first case of an Omicron subvariant, BA.5.2.1, has been found in the financial hub. The news triggered more mandatory testing orders for residents of several neighborhoods in the city, which is still <a href="#">recovering from the psychological scars of strict lockdowns</a> earlier in the year.</p> <p>Unrelated to the coronavirus, a rare case of cholera was reported at Wuhan University. The patient, a graduate student, has been isolated in a hospital. Medical authorities have tested health workers who had come into contact with the patient for the bacterial disease, which is spread through water or food and causes severe diarrhea.</p> <p>China reported five cases of cholera last year, according to government data.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>07/11 Suicide Prevention Lifeline number: 988</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.king5.com/article/news/health/988-suicide-prevention-lifeline-number-launching/281-425c22dc-066f-4f82-9673-d94a4917ce94">https://www.king5.com/article/news/health/988-suicide-prevention-lifeline-number-launching/281-425c22dc-066f-4f82-9673-d94a4917ce94</a>
GIST	<p>LACEY, Wash. — A new initiative aimed at easing the process for contacting the <a href="#">National Suicide Prevention Lifeline</a> will launch later this week.</p> <p>Starting July 16, callers will be able to reach the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline nationwide by simply dialing 988.</p> <p>The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) has designated this three-digit number to provide access to the lifeline, even though some areas already allowed callers in crisis to reach the lifeline by dialing 988.</p> <p>Washington passed a bill proposed by Gov. Jay Inslee in 2021 that allocated \$95 million to develop the program.</p> <p>As part of preparing for this change, callers in the state of Washington now must include a three-digit area code whenever placing a call. The area code requirement has been in place in western Washington since 2017, but now will extend to the entire state.</p> <p>Michelle McDaniel the CEO of Seattle based, "Crisis Connections" said it's one of three crisis lines in Washington that will be part of nearly 200 other call centers nationwide that will answer the call in a time of need.</p> <p>"A lot of folks who do need to reach out, do need to be able to talk to somebody who is trained, somebody to support them, help them navigate through their crisis but then also help them reach resources and community," said McDaniel.</p> <p>McDaniel said since 2019 there has been a 26 percent increase in crisis calls at her organization. She anticipates that number will increase with this new service.</p> <p>"We're averaging about 1,500 calls a month right now and we're expecting that to double in the next few months, so we've been ramping up staffing in order to make sure no one who calls ends of up going on hold," said McDaniel.</p> <p>With state funding, Crisis Connections went from three employees picking up National Suicide Prevention calls, to 35 new employees. Which McDaniel hopes people will utilize at all hours starting July 16th at midnight and beyond.</p>

	<p>"No issue is too big or too small, call 988 if you have concerns, call 988 if you're worried about yourself, call 988 if you're not even sure who to talk to about an issue you're going through," said McDaniel.</p> <p>The existing number also still will work for callers hoping to contact the lifeline at 1-800-273-8255 (TALK).</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>07/11 More local monkeypox cases announced</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.kiro7.com/news/local/more-local-monkeypox-cases-cdcs-warnings-your-summer-plans/5YNTXMTAVBFMFDRZU2QZVI7UFQ/">https://www.kiro7.com/news/local/more-local-monkeypox-cases-cdcs-warnings-your-summer-plans/5YNTXMTAVBFMFDRZU2QZVI7UFQ/</a>
GIST	<p>Snohomish County is now seeing its first case of monkeypox, days after a likely first case for Pierce County was just announced over the weekend.</p> <p>That's in addition to 16 cases confirmed in <a href="#">King County</a>.</p> <p>The virus causes fever, aches and a rash that can look like pimples or blisters.</p> <p>"It's kind of annoying; (it) feels like we're getting hit with all these waves of viruses," said Julia Graupensperger, who was in Seattle on Monday.</p> <p>The University of Washington School of Medicine announced Monday that its virology labs are now able to test for monkeypox — work they just started doing last week. People need to access testing through their health provider, and the turnaround time is around one to two days.</p> <p>The virus does not spread through the air. You need to be in close physical contact with someone to get it.</p> <p>"It's not sexually transmitted necessarily. It can be passed through intimate contact or close physical contact with someone with the pustules or the rash from monkeypox," said Nigel Turner, the Communicable Disease Control division director with Tacoma-Pierce County Public Health.</p> <p>But with summer in full swing, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention is warning people with plans like going to concerts or clubs. On its website, <a href="#">the CDC says</a> a party "where there is minimal clothing and where there is direct, personal, often skin-to-skin contact has some risk."</p> <p>"Avoid any rash you see on others," the CDC advises. Events where people are "fully clothed and unlikely to share skin-to-skin contact are safer," the CDC says.</p> <p>"It kind of makes you think twice about going to really crowded places like bars, concerts, ... or rubbing up against people," Graupensperger said.</p> <p>So far, the virus has heavily impacted the LGBTQ community, with <a href="#">the Washington State Department of Health</a> saying current local and international cases "mainly involve men who have sex with men."</p> <p>But local doctors and public health officials are warning against stigma.</p> <p>"The stigma really doesn't help. We need to avoid that. The important thing is this is a disease anyone can get," said Turner said.</p> <p>"As the monkeypox outbreak has persisted, we're starting to see heterosexual transmission and transmission with close contact in households," said Dr. Deborah Fuller, division director of the Infectious Diseases &amp; Translational Medicine unit at UW Medicine.</p>

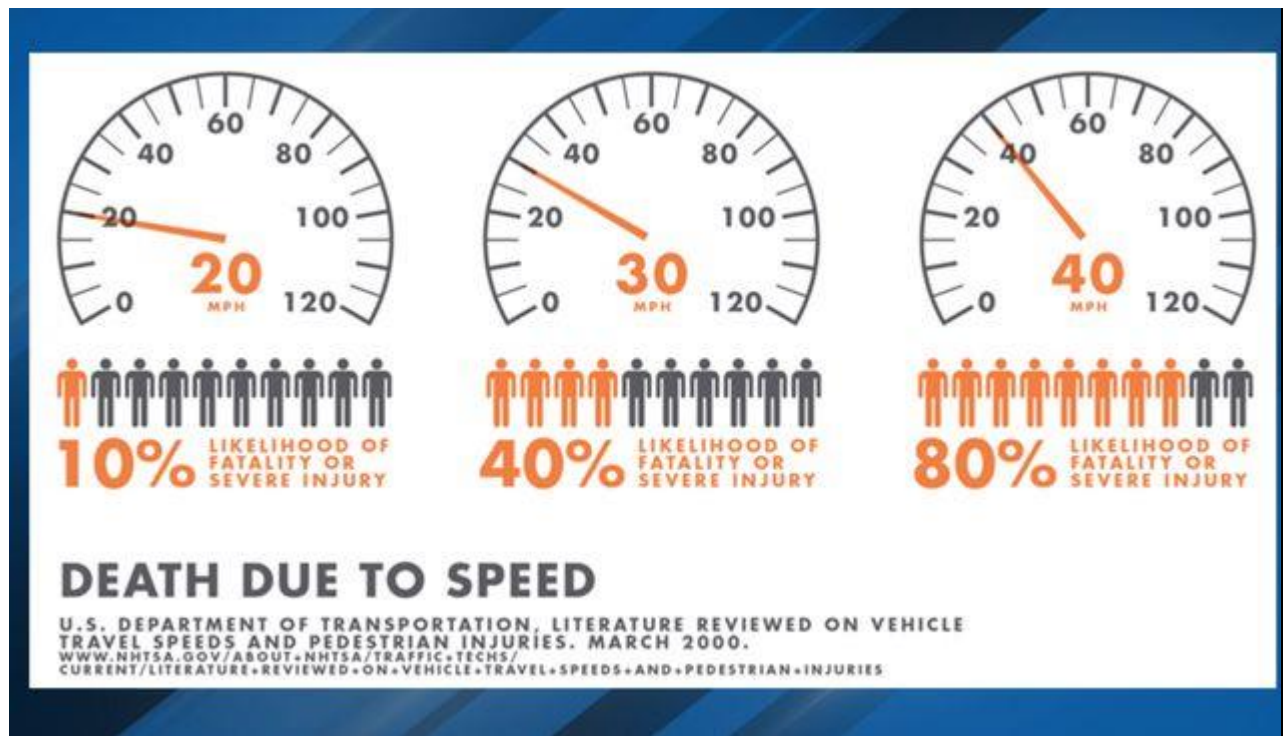
	<p>“Viruses don’t care. They like to infect any warm body. They do not see any difference between people,” Fuller said.</p> <p>Doctors are putting the CDC’s warning in perspective, reminding you the monkeypox virus is still very rare.</p> <p>“It’s not something the general person is in very high risk of getting,” Fuller said.</p> <p>“It’s important people do enjoy their summer, but have some common sense about this. If you have some blisters or pustules, don’t attend the event until you’ve had it checked out,” Turner said.</p> <p>Another challenge: Though two smallpox vaccines have been approved for use to prevent monkeypox (the two viruses are closely related), the vaccine rollout has been slow.</p> <p>Washington state currently has enough to vaccinate fewer than 400 people, and most of that has already been distributed to close contacts of people who’ve gotten sick.</p> <p>More doses are coming from the federal government in July, but it’s not clear yet how many doses will be allocated.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>07/11 Leavenworth plans for Oktoberfest 2022</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.kiro7.com/news/local/after-2021-cancellation-leavenworth-announces-plans-oktoberfest-2022/OVSREGXZMJDM7BPKDYDZ3RY7SM/">https://www.kiro7.com/news/local/after-2021-cancellation-leavenworth-announces-plans-oktoberfest-2022/OVSREGXZMJDM7BPKDYDZ3RY7SM/</a>
GIST	<p>The city of Leavenworth has announced details about Oktoberfest 2022, set to happen over three weekends – Sept. 30 to Oct. 1, Oct. 7 to Oct. 8, and Oct. 14 to Oct. 15.</p> <p>Leavenworth’s Oktoberfest in 2021 was canceled due to statewide COVID-19 restrictions after the city decided the usual celebration would be a “disservice” to everybody involved.</p> <p>The city did say the 2022 event will look different from past celebrations.</p> <p>The festival area will be more spread out, with events at the Festhalle, Front Street Park and other areas of downtown.</p> <p>There will also be more family friendly events, such as a Kinderplatz with a root beer garden.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>07/12 Tacoma prepares to clear homeless camps</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://komonews.com/news/local/concerns-about-services-as-tacoma-prepares-to-clear-2-homeless-camps">https://komonews.com/news/local/concerns-about-services-as-tacoma-prepares-to-clear-2-homeless-camps</a>
GIST	<p>TACOMA, Wash. — Crews from the city of Tacoma are set to clear two homeless camps Tuesday but the people living there say the assistance being offered by the city is no help at all.</p> <p>One of the encampments is along Milwaukee Way, and portions have already been swept but there is still a group of people living in vehicles just outside the gates to the Port of Tacoma.</p> <p>“They showed up here on the 8th, gave us a notice and said, ‘Y’all have to be out of here by the 12th,’” said David Koch, who has been staying at the site for about a year, adding that other encampments were alerted weeks before they were told to leave and city officials aren’t giving them the same opportunity. “We have the rest of tonight to get our stuff out of here or lose it.”</p> <p>A few miles away under the Murray Morgan Bridge, Nicole Redelk was also gathering her things. She lives in a trailer and said the city wants her to move but has nowhere for her to go.</p>

	<p>“They don't even have a place for us to park RVs in,” she said.</p> <p>According to posted notices, both encampments are being cleared because of illegal activities and unauthorized occupancies in those areas which has led to an elevated number of 911 calls.</p> <p>Outreach is ongoing on Milwaukee Way and so far eight people have accepted the services available, according to a city spokesperson.</p> <p>Koch said the housing options from the city come up way short.</p> <p>“They offered me a hotel voucher, then told me there was no funding for a hotel so that's basically no offering of anything,” Koch said.</p> <p>The city’s encampment removal policy requires at least 72 hours notice but a spokesperson said they opted for multiple weeks to help people better connect to services.</p> <p>Some campers said the rhetoric doesn't match the reality.</p> <p>“We need help. We need better help. We need people who are going to take people by the hand and say, 'Let's do this. We can do this. We can help you,'" Redelk said.</p> <p>Milwaukee Way and the Murray Morgan Bridge mark the 10th and 11th camps slated to be swept so far this year.</p> <p>In 2021, a total of seven encampments were cleared. In 2020, only two camps were removed due to public health guidance during the pandemic.</p>
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<b>HEADLINE</b>	<b>07/11 Portland, Seattle: ‘slow the flock down’</b>
<b>SOURCE</b>	<a href="https://komonews.com/news/local/portland-seattle-want-drivers-to-slow-the-flock-down-pbot-bureau-of-transportation-oregon-sdot-signs-location-pacific-northwest-speeding-driver-enforcement-pedestrian-crash">https://komonews.com/news/local/portland-seattle-want-drivers-to-slow-the-flock-down-pbot-bureau-of-transportation-oregon-sdot-signs-location-pacific-northwest-speeding-driver-enforcement-pedestrian-crash</a>
<b>GIST</b>	<p>PORTLAND, Ore. — The Pacific Northwest’s largest cities are trying to wing it with a new ad campaign aimed at getting drivers to “slow the flock down!”</p> <p>The message was released Monday from the Portland Bureau of Transportation (PBOT) and the Seattle Department of Transportation.</p> <p>PBOT says the “colorful, tongue-in-cheek message” will encourage drivers to stop flying on the freeways and side streets and follow the speed limit.</p> <p>The campaign also highlights the risk of a deadly pedestrian crash increases with speed.</p> <p>“A pedestrian struck by a person driving 40 mph is eight times more likely to die than a pedestrian struck at 20 mph,” PBOT said.</p>



*Slow the flock down messaging - Portland Bureau of Transportation image*

They also said the campaign's intent to get drivers to decrease their speed will help both cities move toward their Vision Zero goals.

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HEADLINE	<b>07/11 Relief eludes many renters as demand rises</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2022/07/11/business/economy/rent-inflation-interest-rates.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2022/07/11/business/economy/rent-inflation-interest-rates.html</a>
GIST	<p>Rents have been rising swiftly across America for much of the pandemic era, and housing experts are warning that they could now receive a boost from an unlikely source: <a href="#">the Federal Reserve</a>.</p> <p>As the central bank raises interest rates to cool down the economy and contain rapid inflation, it is also pushing up mortgage costs, putting home purchases out of reach for many first-time buyers. If people who would have otherwise bought a home remain waylaid in apartments and rented houses, it could compound already-booming demand — keeping pressure on rental prices.</p> <p>While it is tough to predict how big or how lasting that Fed-induced bump in rental demand might prove, it could ironically make it more difficult for the central bank to wrestle inflation lower in the near term. Rent-related costs make up nearly a third of the closely tracked Consumer Price Index inflation measure, so anything that helps to keep them climbing at an unusually brisk pace is likely to perpetuate rapid inflation.</p> <p>Rents on new leases climbed by <a href="#">14.1 percent</a> in the year through June, according to Apartment List, an apartment listing service. While that is slightly less than the 17.5 percent increase over the course of 2021, it is still an unusually rapid pace of growth. Before the pandemic, a 2 to 3 percent pace of annual increase was normal. The recent quick market rent increases have been slowly spilling over to official inflation data, which track both new and existing leases.</p> <p>“A lot of folks are seeing now as they go to re-sign their lease that it’s hundreds more dollars than last month, thousands more dollars than last month,” said Nicole Bachaud, an economist at the housing website Zillow, whose own rent tracker is running fast. “We’re going to continue to see pressure in rent prices; to what extent is to be seen.”</p>



Gail Linsenbard lectures on philosophy at a college in Boulder, Colo., but housing in the area has gotten so pricey that she has been teaching remotely — recently from a friend’s house in Cincinnati, now from a friend’s place in New York — to make ends meet.

“The rents in Boulder have just skyrocketed, so I could no longer afford to live there,” said Dr. Linsenbard, a 62-year-old ethicist, who said that the \$36,000 she earns lecturing four classes per semester had always been tight, but was increasingly failing to keep up with inflation. While she can rely on a national network of friends, the situation has disrupted her life.

“I’d so prefer my own place,” she said.

Besides burdening millions of families across America, rising rents have emerged as a particularly thorny issue for the Fed. While coronavirus-related supply disruptions have fueled price increases in products like cars and couches, the recent surge in rents relates to longer-running fundamentals. America has for years failed to build enough housing, and as members of the massive millennial generation grow older and move away from their parents and roommates, the need for apartments and leased homes has grown.

The pandemic took that demographic trend and sped it up. After being cooped up during quarantines, people looked for their own places — and apartment construction could not keep pace.

Builders were completing units at an unusually rapid 349,000-per-year rate in early 2022, about 1.2 times the prepandemic pace, [based on estimates in a report](#) from the Joint Center for Housing Studies at Harvard. But the number of occupied apartments was rising more than twice as quickly.

America’s rental [vacancy rate slumped](#) as apartment supply struggled to keep pace with soaring demand, and was lingering at levels last seen in the 1980s through the start of 2022.

The resulting run-up in market rents, which [began in earnest](#) last summer, has slowly trickled into official inflation data as people renew their leases. A category in the Consumer Price Index that [measures rent of primary residence](#) surged by 5.2 percent in the year through May, and fresh data will be released this week.

Because a [large number of new apartments and condominiums](#) have been started since the pandemic began, few if any economists expect the recent breakneck pace of rent increases to continue: More supply should be on its way. Some markets, like Phoenix, have already seen a slowdown in real-time rent trackers.

But new buildings are taking a long time to finish amid shortages of both the labor and supplies needed to turn blueprints into reality, and it is uncertain when those challenges will clear up. Plus, new apartment and housing developments skew toward high-end and luxury units at a moment when the nation is short about 1.5 million housing units that are affordable and available to lower-income renters, according to a [Harvard housing study](#).

In short, it is not clear how well the coming supply will match the areas of booming demand.

As people compete for a still-constrained number of apartments, it is unlikely that rental prices will fall from the elevated levels they have reached in the past year, experts said — they will probably just climb more slowly than they are now. And as labor and utility costs for landlords rise, they could even continue rising faster than normal.

“We’ll probably see rent growth moderate to some degree,” said Jay Parsons, head of economics at RealPage. But he noted that costs are going up for landlords and demand remains solid, adding that “I don’t think it will moderate as much as people want to see.”

And the Fed’s rate increases will only complicate the situation.

As rates rise, more “people will have to renew their lease — maybe they thought they had enough money for a down payment,” said Lawrence Yun, chief economist at the National Association of Realtors. “Rental demand will be rising.”

That potential bump will likely fade with time, housing experts said. If the economy slows sharply, as many economists expect given the Fed’s efforts, rents are likely to follow, as people move back in with roommates or family members and rental demand takes a hit.

“The main thing that would cool down the rental market is a slowing of wage growth,” said Igor Popov, chief economist at Apartment List. “A lot of the lifestyle gains that came with more and better housing are probably going to reverse a bit.”

But the transition could take time to play out. Households might use savings to try to sustain their living situations for a while, and for now, wage growth has remained strong before accounting for inflation.

In the meantime, an already limited supply of rental housing could be curtailed in the months and years ahead as the Fed’s rate moves push up financing costs and deter developers. The central bank began raising interest rates from near zero in March and expects to lift them [to nearly 3.5 percent](#) by the end of the year.

Already, [new home construction](#) has dropped sharply as borrowing costs climb, declining 14.4 percent in May to the lowest rate in more than a year. Early [data suggest](#) that apartment construction is also taking a hit — something industry executives can attest to.

David Wali, who runs the Boise office of the Gardner Company, a developer of residential and commercial properties throughout the mountain West, said the question of whether to build has been clouded by inflation, rising interest rates, and the continued disruption of supply chains, which has builders worried they might finish projects, be ready to rent out the units, “and be left with no appliances.”

Those risks have in turn caused lenders to turn more conservative by requiring developers to put more of their own money into projects, further crimping development.

Mr. Wali has already started delaying projects, including 500 apartments in the Boise area, and he said that as the lack of new development works its way through the system in the coming months, supply will be even more squeezed. The flip side — good for him, bad for renters — is that rising rental demand has him feeling good about rent levels on apartments his company already owns.

“Those are fantastic,” he said.

The nation may be seeing a geographic shift in which rental markets are hot. Early in the pandemic, as remote work gave people geographic flexibility, places like Orlando and Tampa, Fla., and Rochester, N.Y., experienced pronounced rent growth. Now, some cities in the middle of the country are cooling, even as offices recall workers and coastal markets like [New York City heat up](#).

“I’ve been practicing for 42 years, and I’ve never seen the huge, across-the-board demand for rent increases that I’m seeing now,” said Samuel Himmelstein, a tenants’ rights lawyer in New York City who said that clients were regularly getting in touch with him now to see if there is anything they can do about landlord demands for 20 to 30 percent higher rent.

National housing policy could help with the rental crunch over the long run. The Biden administration has proposed [a series of measures](#) meant to foster more affordable housing construction, though [housing groups have argued](#) that additional congressional action is likely needed to fully address the shortage of affordable units across owned and rented housing.

	<p>For now, the housing market is bifurcating, with the market for purchased homes slowing even as the rental market remains hot — a trend Eric Parks has witnessed. The online college professor listed a duplex in South Lake Tahoe, Calif., in May for \$899,000, a price at the bottom range of its online valuation, but elicited no interest. He cut the price, but received only offers that he found unacceptably low.</p> <p>So he decided to instead rent the Reno, Nev., condominium he had been living in for \$1,500 to a traveling nurse, who was one of 18 applicants, while moving back to the duplex and listing its neighboring unit for \$2,500. It worked.</p> <p>“I would never have thought the listing would result in no offers,” he said. “But the rental market is nuts.”</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>07/11 Russia steps up attacks on civilian areas</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2022/07/11/world/europe/ukraine-civilian-casualties.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2022/07/11/world/europe/ukraine-civilian-casualties.html</a>
GIST	<p>BAKHMUT, Ukraine — Over one town, an arc of fireballs burst and drifted down like fireworks, setting gardens and homes ablaze. In another, Russian missiles slammed into a five-story apartment block, shearing off a side of the building and killing at least 30 people.</p> <p>Officially, Russia’s military has paused its drive to seize Ukrainian territory, but in recent days, it has stepped up its haphazard attacks on civilian areas, a constant reminder that it can inflict casualties and destruction at will as it tries to wear down the willingness to resist.</p> <p>In one town after another across three fronts in eastern Ukraine, a hail of seemingly random Russian strikes, delivered by warplanes, artillery and missiles, has killed, maimed and terrified residents and Ukrainian soldiers alike.</p> <p>Russian forces are using the lull in their ground offensive to regroup and resupply, in line with President Vladimir V. Putin’s <a href="#">order</a> last week that some troops rest after the capture of Luhansk Province, military analysts said on Monday. Beyond the front lines, the destruction and casualties continue as residents are bracing for a renewed, all-out assault.</p> <p>In the town of Chasiv Yar, in eastern Ukraine, emergency crews were still finding bodies on Monday from a single attack over the weekend. A missile strike hit an apartment complex late Saturday, and the death toll has risen to 31, the <a href="#">Ukrainian State Emergency Service said</a>. Some of the dead were members of the military.</p> <p>Ukrainian officials said Monday that in the previous 24 hours, Russian strikes had killed at least eight civilians. In eastern Donetsk Province, which includes Chasiv Yar, at least 10 cities and towns were hit, and two people killed, bringing the civilian death toll in the province to nearly 600 since Russia invaded Ukraine in February, according to the region’s military governor, Pavlo Kyrylenko.</p> <p>About nine miles from Chasiv Yar, in the city of Bakhmut, Russian troops fired incendiary munitions, limited by international law and designed to set fires or cause burn injuries, at a neighborhood Sunday, officials said.</p> <p>“It’s the first time we had this on the civilian part of Bakhmut,” said Katerina, 31, a social worker. Her neighbor, Olesia, 17, said that after days of increased shelling, residents were used to the sound of the rocket launchers commonly known as Grads.</p> <p>“But this sounded different,” she said. “It was a light sound, like <i>shoosh, shoosh, shoosh.</i>”</p>

Within minutes, smoke was rising from at least eight fires around the neighborhood. Neighbors in shorts and sandals frantically pulled garden hoses toward a burning house. They hurled buckets of water at the flames as the rafters and tiled roof of a house cracked and popped.

Off-duty police officers and soldiers arrived in small cars to help. They carried buckets of water, their arms and hands blackened from fighting another blaze down the street.

Many homeowners had left town weeks ago, and many of those who remained in the face of Russia's advance did so because they had little choice. Some are elderly, or caring for older relatives. Some did not have the resources to flee, and [some support the Russians bearing down](#) with attacks. Some fear the prospect of going west and [joining the millions of other people](#) forced from their homes.

Those who remain live with a constant threat of death from the sky. On Sunday, a retired miner, Viktor, 67, watched one fire from his house across the street.

"I worked 20 years down the mines and this is what I get," he said, then turned away, weeping. Like many others, he was reluctant to give his surname for fear of retribution if the town changes hands.

Some residents retrieved canisters and capsules, identified by soldiers as pieces of incendiary explosives, from their gardens and streets. A soldier warned them to cover them with sand rather than water. "We get them on the front line all the time," he said, declining to give his name because of military protocol. "Now they got them here."

Bakhmut, an important military stronghold for Ukraine, is less than 10 miles from Russian lines and a likely target for its planned advance through the eastern Donbas region, which encompasses Donetsk, now mostly under Russian control, and Luhansk.

Russia launched attacks in the northeast and south, as well.

Hours before dawn on Monday, a missile damaged a school building in the city of Kharkiv, a regional official, Oleh Sinehubov, said on Telegram. He said that no one was hurt there, and that a six-story apartment building was hit 20 minutes later. Emergency workers rescued an 86-year-old woman from the rubble. "Only civilian structures — a shopping center and houses of peaceful Kharkiv residents — came under the fire of the Russians," he said.

Six people were killed and 31 more were wounded in northeastern Ukraine, local officials said.

Explosions also caused damage early Monday in the southern city of Mykolaiv, Ukrainian officials said. At least one person was wounded in a missile strike, the head of the regional military administration, Vitaliy Kim, said on Telegram.

On at least one thing, President Volodymyr Zelensky and his Russian counterpart and nemesis, Vladimir V. Putin, were in agreement: Though its forces are severely depleted, Russia's assault on Ukraine is nowhere near finished.

Ukrainians and Western analysts believe that before long, Mr. Putin will order a new offensive to conquer the remaining Ukrainian-held territory in Donetsk, anchored by the cities of Sloviansk, Kramatorsk and Bakhmut — if not more.

Last week, Mr. Putin told Russian lawmakers, "We haven't started anything yet."

Mr. Zelensky, citing the slew of recent strikes, mocked the idea that Russia's attacks had abated.

"Many talked about the alleged 'operational pause' in the actions of the occupiers," he said in an overnight speech. "Thirty-four airstrikes by Russian aircraft over the past day is an answer to all those who came up with this 'pause.'"

But the recent attacks appeared to differ, military analysts said, from Russia's earlier tactics in the war, such as its failed blitzkrieg on Ukraine's capital, Kyiv, and then its concentrated, weekslong bombardment of major regional cities.

The latest attacks hit a variety of targets, primarily in Donetsk, without a corresponding attempt to advance inch by inch.

And they came as Russia announced that its forces were taking a "theater-wide operational pause," with units "regrouping to rest, refit and reconstitute" — though it made clear that its definition of a pause did "not mean a complete cessation of hostilities," but rather that attacks were "more preparative" for later offensives.

From the outset of the war, [Russia has battered civilian targets](#), but Ukrainian and Western officials say such attacks have grown more indiscriminate, in part because Moscow is running low on modern, precision munitions and [relying more on older, less accurate ones](#).

On Monday, Mr. Putin [signed a decree](#) that offered a simplified path to Russian citizenship for all Ukrainians, indicating Russia might seek to establish permanent control of the Ukrainian territories currently occupied by Moscow's forces.

But despite its president's bravado, Russia [is desperate for more soldiers](#), relying on impoverished ethnic groups, Ukrainians from the separatist territories, mercenaries and militarized National Guard units. The logistics of finding more troops, replacing damaged gear and getting them into position made an "operational pause" necessary, analysts say.

Russia and Ukraine keep the numbers of battlefield dead and wounded careful secrets, but the British military recently estimated the number of dead Russians at 25,000, with tens of thousands more wounded or simply exhausted after almost five months of war. That is far more than the roughly 15,000 the Soviet Union lost in its nine-year war in Afghanistan.

Even by conservative estimates, tens of thousands of civilians and soldiers have died.

Ukraine also faces a manpower problem, but its officials have pleaded loudest for help with their primary disadvantage: heavy weapons and ammunition to counter Russia's strategy of long-range strikes on homes, malls and transit centers, as well as troops.

In Chasiv Yar, where the apartment building was hit, one young man was trapped for more than 20 hours, pinned under the rubble. On Sunday evening, he was pulled out by rescuers, who quickly covered him with a blue blanket and gently placed him on a stretcher.

He was one of nine people saved from the complex so far, officials said. It was unclear whether anyone else was alive.

"My grandmother was here," one neighbor said, before pointing into the pile of rubble.

"That's her bed," he said. "I hope they will find her, and I can give her a funeral."

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HEADLINE	07/12 US: Russia seeks Iran surveillance drones
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/07/12/world/russia-ukraine-war-news">https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/07/12/world/russia-ukraine-war-news</a>
GIST	WASHINGTON — President Biden's national security adviser said on Monday that Russia is seeking hundreds of surveillance drones from Iran, including those capable of firing missiles, to use in the war in Ukraine.

The official, Jake Sullivan, said it was unclear whether Iran had already sent any of the remotely piloted systems to Russia, but said that the United States had information that indicated Iran was preparing to train Russian troops to use them as soon as this month.

“Our information indicates that the Iranian government is preparing to provide Russia with up to several hundred U.A.V.s, including weapons-capable U.A.V.s on an expedited timeline,” Mr. Sullivan told reporters at the White House, referring to unmanned aerial vehicles.

Russia’s monthslong bombardment of Ukraine has exhausted Russia of many of its precision-guided weapons, and Mr. Sullivan, in saying that war was “coming at a cost to the sustainment of its own weapons,” seemed to suggest that the Kremlin was, or soon would be, running short on armed surveillance drones.

The timing of Mr. Sullivan’s comments about what presumably had been classified intelligence was also curious, coming almost as an aside at the end of a briefing to preview President Biden’s trip this week to Israel and Saudi Arabia, where Iran’s nuclear program and malign activities in the region will be a key subject of discussion.

Iran has supplied drone and missile technology to Houthi rebels in Yemen, who have attacked Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, as well as to Shia militia in Iraq, who have carried out drone strikes against U.S. troops there. But Mr. Sullivan’s comments about any imminent transfer of Iranian drones to Russia to use in Ukraine caught several senior U.S. national security officials by surprise on Monday.

The Biden administration is trying to slow Russian weapon manufacturing by denying it components made with Western technology. Gina M. Raimondo, the commerce secretary, said last month that American and international controls had lowered exports to Russia of semiconductors and computer chips by 90 percent.

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HEADLINE	<b>07/11 Ex-SPD chief key witness against officer</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/law-justice/former-seattle-police-chief-to-be-key-witness-against-auburn-officer-charged-with-assault-and-murder/">https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/law-justice/former-seattle-police-chief-to-be-key-witness-against-auburn-officer-charged-with-assault-and-murder/</a>
GIST	<p>Former Seattle Police Chief Jim Pugel has been retained as a key witness in the murder prosecution of Auburn police Officer Jeffrey Nelson, ready to testify that Nelson repeatedly escalated minor incidents into violent confrontations then used unnecessary or excessive force to make an arrest.</p> <p>Pugel, a 37-year law enforcement veteran <a href="#">who served as interim chief of the Seattle department</a> and then as undersheriff in King County, was brought on by prosecutors to review more than 70 instances in which Nelson, an Auburn K-9 officer and Iraq War combat veteran, reported or was investigated for using force on the job, dating to 2013. According to his report, Pugel reviewed more than 70 Auburn police use-of-force, internal affairs and officer reports, along with eyewitness accounts and dash-camera video.</p> <p>Pugel, in a <a href="#">detailed 20-page report</a>, identified 17 instances when he considered the use of force “at best unnecessary and often excessive or unconstitutional.”</p> <p>In pleadings, prosecutors detailed 10 of those instances in an attempt to convince the court that Nelson regularly “seize[d] opportunities to use violence against people in routine encounters and often to concoct excuses afterward.” The state says it will use video and “his own words and actions” to demonstrate.</p> <p>Nelson, 42, with the Auburn police for 14 years, <a href="#">was charged in 2020 with second-degree murder and first-degree assault after he confronted Jesse Sarey</a>, 26, sitting on a curb on May 31, 2019, outside an Auburn convenience store.</p> <p>Nelson was responding to reports of disorderly conduct involving a man, Sarey, acting strangely and throwing items at cars and kicking buildings. Nelson got into a physical fight with Sarey, and has said Sarey tried to grab a folding knife out of his uniform vest and tried to get his gun.</p>



Nelson fatally shot Sarey. Nelson was injured, but not shot.

Prosecutors want to submit evidence to a jury, through Pugel, that they say shows Nelson has a pattern of escalating simple, nonthreatening stops or investigations into incidents when he used significant force, including releasing his police dog to detain and maul people suspected of crimes such as theft or jaywalking before making an arrest.

Nelson is the first officer charged under a new police deadly force law passed by the Washington Legislature that did away with the need to prove “actual malice” by an officer in order to charge him with homicide.

Trial is expected next spring.

King County Superior Court Judge Nicole Gaines Phelps has taken the prosecution’s motion under advisement. She is also considering a request by defense lawyers to submit evidence of Sarey’s past run-ins with police and extensive drug use to the jury.

Pugel’s report details several occasions of Nelson using a “lateral vascular neck restraint” to subdue suspects wanted for minor crimes or showing passive resistance to arrest. Pugel points out that most departments consider use of that technique, which cuts off blood flow to the brain and renders an individual unconscious, as an application of deadly force, the same as shooting someone.

The Washington Legislature last year [banned the use of LVNRs and chokeholds](#).

Pugel’s report is intended to bolster the state’s contention that Nelson “had a commonly used plan to create [opportunities and excuses to use violence during routine, unthreatening situations](#),” according to pleadings filed in King County Superior Court.

Among the instances detailed was the May 22, 2018, K-9 mauling of a juvenile suspect in a robbery and car theft. According to Pugel’s report, gleaned from dash-camera video and Auburn police and use-of-force reports, Nelson fist-bumped another officer and yelled “[expletive] Yeah! Woo Hoo!” after the dog attacked the suspect, who had surrendered to other officers and was lying prone on the ground. The dog had been let off its leash and attacked the juvenile for nearly 30 seconds until Nelson caught up with it and called it off, according to Pugel’s report. The suspect was treated at a hospital for bites and lacerations.

Pugel called the instance an “outrageous use of force.” According to his report, Koen, the police dog, was used to attack several suspects already in custody or who were not actively resisting, and in one case was used to maul a jaywalker.

In another episode, Nelson — while working off-duty in uniform as security at an Auburn casino — used an LVNR to choke a man into unconsciousness after the man “shoulder bumped” Nelson after having been expelled from the venue. Pugel noted that Nelson used potentially lethal force while enforcing casino policy — no law had been broken.

The defense argues that prosecutors’ efforts to shoehorn Pugel’s conclusions about Nelson’s uses of force into this case are an attempt to sidestep rules of evidence that prohibit evidence of someone’s “propensity” to commit an act by renaming it a “common scheme,” which is admissible.

“Washington law unequivocally prohibits this tactic,” Nelson’s attorney, Emma Scanlan, wrote in court pleadings, “And the state’s motion should be denied in its entirety.”

The prosecution’s motions, which await a ruling from the judge, also provide new details of Nelson’s tattoos the state hopes to show a jury as “additional evidence of his adoption of a ... plan to employ violence in his policing,” including photographs of tattoos Judge Phelps has previously ordered redacted for being potentially “inflammatory” and possibly impinging on Nelson’s right to a fair trial.

They include tattoos around his lower legs, one reading “Protect the Innocent” and the other “Punish the Deserving.” Another photo shows a large tattoo on Nelson’s thigh, depicting a set of fanged jaws with the Latin phrase “Fortis Fortuna Adiuvat” arching over it. The translation: “Fortune Favors the Brave [or Bold].”

Vertical script between the two jaws spells “Koen,” the name of Nelson’s police dog, which Pugel concluded was released to bite people several times unnecessarily, sending several people to the hospital for treatment of bites and lacerations, including a 15-year-old car theft suspect.

Nelson’s defense attorneys argue Pugel’s opinions are irrelevant to Nelson’s actions the day he shot Sarey, and say prosecutors are reading “nefarious” meaning into tattoos that are commonly seen on soldiers and police officers. Nelson was both, having served two combat tours in Iraq.

The King County Prosecuting Attorney’s Office declined to comment.

“Officer Nelson has nothing to hide,” Scanlan said Friday in a statement to The Seattle Times. “We asked the Court to go ahead and have an open court hearing about the tattoos and to release the tattoo images to the public.”

She said the two tattoos on his legs — “Punish the Deserving, Protect the Innocent” is the motto of the Tomahawks, 23rd Infantry Regiment, in which Nelson served.

“It’s a personal memorial to friends and fellow soldiers who didn’t make it back home,” Scanlan said.

She said the decision to use Pugel as a use-of-force expert is “perplexing.” Pugel was a member of the command staff at the Seattle Police Department when the Department of Justice sued the SPD in 2012 over the routine use of unconstitutional and excessive force, resulting in a federal consent decree that remains in place today.

“The King County Prosecuting Attorney’s Office seems to want to make this trial about everything but what happened on May 31, 2019,” Scanlan said.

Nelson was charged by King County prosecutors after a review of surveillance video from a nearby business and statements from witnesses, including Steven Woodard, a bystander who according to court documents and the charging documents saw Nelson slug Sarey several times, then pin him against an ice freezer, draw his pistol and shoot him in the abdomen.

Initially, Woodard had jumped out of his car to help Nelson. He said he saw the knife fly out of Nelson’s vest. It landed at Woodard’s feet.

Woodard said that after the initial gunshot, Sarey slumped down the ice freezer and collapsed in a sitting position.

With Sarey apparently incapacitated and on the ground, the video shows and Woodard said he saw Nelson clearing a jammed round from his .45-caliber pistol and, according to court documents, “glanced around and seemed to look directly at Woodard. Then, 3.44 seconds after the first shot, Nelson extended his weapon, took aim at Sarey and fired a bullet into his forehead. “Woodard told arriving officers what he saw, describing the second shot as “bull[expletive].”

“He shot him in the stomach or wherever he shot him,” Woodard is quoted in prosecution documents. “And then he looked at me and then he looked at him and he shot him in the head.”

“So you’re saying that the second shot was unnecessary?” he was asked.

“Yes, I’m saying,” Woodard responded.

	<p>Nelson has been involved in two other fatal shootings: the May 7, 2011, death of Brian Scaman and the June 10, 2017, death of Isaiah Obet.</p> <p>Auburn paid \$1.25 million to settle a lawsuit filed by Obet’s brother in 2020, just after Nelson was charged. Last year, the <a href="#">city paid \$4 million to Sarey’s family to settle their wrongful death claim.</a></p>
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HEADLINE	<b>07/11 Lyles’ cousin decries inquest process</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/charleena-lyles-cousin-recounts-horrific-inquest-process/">https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/charleena-lyles-cousin-recounts-horrific-inquest-process/</a>
GIST	<p>“This process has been horrific in every way.”</p> <p>That’s how Katrina Johnson described the inquest into the 2017 police killing of her cousin, Charleena Lyles, a 30-year-old, pregnant mother of four.</p> <p>I spoke with Johnson on Thursday, the day after a six-member inquest jury found police officers <a href="#">justified</a> in Lyles’ killing. The Lyles inquest was part of a new process that was finally <a href="#">implemented</a> in 2022.</p> <p>At inquests, jurors look into the facts surrounding police killings. Their findings may be used to determine whether officers are charged.</p> <p>The new inquest process came after years of legal challenges over changes that were intended to give victims’ families more of a voice, including <a href="#">giving jurors</a> an opportunity to determine if the person was killed by “criminal means” and ensure families <a href="#">have access</a> to a lawyer.</p> <p>But despite those changes, both the Lyles inquest and the Damarius Butts inquest — the first two under the new system — resulted in the same outcome we have seen for over the past <a href="#">50 years</a>: a finding that the officers were justified.</p> <p>“I’m pretty numb right now,” Johnson said. She said the weeks of inquest proceedings were “grueling.”</p> <p>“I feel almost like I’m even more traumatized by this whole inquest process than the day they actually killed her,” she said.</p> <p>It wasn’t just the gut-wrenching testimony about the details of the killing. (One of the officers described how Lyles’ infant crawled on top of her body, “screaming and crying”; her older son told the officer, “You shot my mom.”) It was also the way in which the inquest was conducted, Johnson said.</p> <p>As the Lyles family attorney Karen Koehler said in a statement after the decision, “The process focused only on the officers’ states of mind. Not on Ms. Lyles. Despite requests for a fuller picture to be presented — including a forensic expert on the topic of her mental health — the scope was strictly narrowed.”</p> <p>Lyles’ mental health was deemed largely “irrelevant,” Koehler said.</p> <p>Lyles was killed after calling the police to report a burglary in her apartment. She had a history of mental illness and pulled a paring knife on the officers who came to investigate, the inquest determined, and they ultimately shot her seven times, killing her.</p> <p>The officers argued they had no alternative to killing Lyles — even though she weighed just 110 pounds and had a 4-inch knife. They argued the door to the apartment was closed, preventing their exit, yet surveillance <a href="#">video played during the inquest</a> showed one of the officers backing out of the door as shots were heard.</p>

When I have written about [this case before](#), the No. 1 response I get has been, “But she had a knife! What other choice did they have?” Yet unlike Seattle, where [14% of police shootings](#) involve a person with a knife, other places manage to de-escalate and arrest people with knives without shooting or killing them.

As the Chicago Tribune reported in a [2017 opinion piece](#), in England and Wales — where, they noted, “sharp cutting instruments are no less available to criminals than they are here” — there were just three fatal shootings of any kind by police between 2011 and 2015. But in the U.S., “People armed with nothing but knives get killed by cops all the time in the United States — as many as 165 times per year, or more than three per week,” they wrote.

Further, a [Washington Post analysis](#) in 2015 showed 25% of people shot by police over a six-month period had severe mental health issues.

In Seattle, [35% of people shot by police](#) over the past 20 years were Black, as was Lyles, though Black people make up only [7% of the city’s population](#). Both officers who shot Lyles were white.

In addition to what Johnson called the “one-sided” [inquest testimony](#), the family had to suffer a lack of COVID-19 protocols that left two lawyers and two jurors testing positive for the coronavirus and led to the inquest hearing being closed to the public, Johnson said. Only a very limited number of family members were able to support each other in the hearing room.

Adding to the trauma: an incident where the Seattle police sent a [SWAT team](#) to the hearing after one of the officers reported insults directed toward him by the family, Johnson said.

“Those are the types of things that no family should have to go through while already having to deal with their loved one being killed,” she said.

Johnson said her family has not given up, though she is discouraged that the changes made to the inquest process haven’t done more to help families of police shooting victims.

“I don’t think that you ever heal from this, you just learn to live with what is. My cousin’s children, they will be forever scarred,” she said. “They will never be OK, they will never be the same. They don’t have a mother anymore.”

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HEADLINE	07/11 New coronavirus mutant raises concerns
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/health/new-coronavirus-mutant-raises-concerns-in-india-and-beyond/">https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/health/new-coronavirus-mutant-raises-concerns-in-india-and-beyond/</a>
GIST	<p>The quickly changing coronavirus has spawned yet another super contagious omicron mutant that’s worrying scientists as it gains ground in India and pops up in numerous other countries, including the United States.</p> <p>Scientists say the variant – called BA.2.75 – may be able to spread rapidly and get around immunity from vaccines and previous infection. It’s unclear whether it could cause more serious disease than other omicron variants, including the globally prominent BA.5.</p> <p>“It’s still really early on for us to draw too many conclusions,” said Matthew Binnicker, director of clinical virology at the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota. “But it does look like, especially in India, the rates of transmission are showing kind of that exponential increase.” Whether it will outcompete BA.5, he said, is yet to be determined.</p> <p>Still, the fact that it has already been detected in many parts of the world even with lower levels of viral surveillance “is an early indication it is spreading,” said Shishi Luo, head of infectious diseases for Helix, a company that supplies viral sequencing information to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.</p>

The latest mutant has been spotted in several distant states in India, and appears to be spreading faster than other variants there, said Lipi Thukral, a scientist at the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research-Institute of Genomics and Integrative Biology in New Delhi. It's also been detected in about 10 other countries, including Australia, Germany, the United Kingdom and Canada. Two cases were recently identified on the West Coast of the U.S., and Helix identified a third U.S. case last week.

Fueling experts' concerns are a large number of mutations separating this new variant from omicron predecessors. Some of those mutations are in areas that relate to the spike protein and could allow the virus to bind onto cells more efficiently, Binnicker said.

Another concern is that the genetic tweaks may make it easier for the virus to skirt past antibodies — protective proteins made by the body in response to a vaccine or infection from an earlier variant.

But experts say vaccines and boosters are still the best defense against severe COVID-19. In the fall it's likely the U.S. will see updated formulations of the vaccine being developed that target more recent omicron strains.

"Some may say, 'Well, vaccination and boosting hasn't prevented people from getting infected.' And, yes, that is true," he said. "But what we have seen is that the rates of people ending up in the hospital and dying have significantly decreased. As more people have been vaccinated, boosted or naturally infected, we are starting to see the background levels of immunity worldwide creep up."

It may take several weeks to get a sense of whether the latest omicron mutant may affect the trajectory of the pandemic. Meanwhile Dr. Gagandeep Kang, who studies viruses at India's Christian Medical College in Vellore, said the growing concern over the variant underlines the need for more sustained efforts to track and trace viruses that combine genetic efforts with real world information about who is getting sick and how badly. "It is important that surveillance isn't a start-stop strategy," she said.

Luo said BA.2.75 is another reminder that the coronavirus is continually evolving – and spreading.

"We would like to return to pre-pandemic life, but we still need to be careful," she said. "We need to accept that we're now living with a higher level of risk than we used to."

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HEADLINE	<b>07/11 WSF alternate schedules until further notice</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.king5.com/article/news/local/washington-state-ferries-alternate-schedules-summer/281-c5e6da05-aa1c-413d-b636-d785e390eb73">https://www.king5.com/article/news/local/washington-state-ferries-alternate-schedules-summer/281-c5e6da05-aa1c-413d-b636-d785e390eb73</a>
GIST	<p>EDMONDS, Wash. — Washington State Ferries (WSF) is running on <a href="#">alternate schedules</a> "until further notice" this summer due to crew shortages that have worsened since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. The <a href="#">schedule changes</a> come as WSF prepares for the busiest time of year for ferry ridership.</p> <p>Craig Birkby rides the ferry every week from <a href="#">Edmonds to Kingston</a>.</p> <p>"During the summertime, I do have some beehives over at Kingston and live here in Edmonds, and so I travel over there to check on the bees," Birkby explained.</p> <p>While there's been quite a lot of buzz around reduced ferry schedules this summer, Birkby still enjoys his weekly rides.</p> <p>"It's so relaxing," Birkby said. "It's a great, great way to spend a little trip and to spend the time."</p> <p>For others, like the Carrions, riding a ferry comes once in a blue moon.</p>

"I don't know what the normal schedule is, but it was every hour," said Christina Carrion. "It kind of sucked because we could not get out early."

Carrion dropped her four sons off at the Edmonds-Kingston ferry terminal for them to ride the boat to meet a family friend on the other side of the Sound.

"Thank you for the ferry because or else we would have had to drive all the way up the peninsula, then come all the way back down," she said.

They are just one family of many ramping up ferry ridership this summer.

"Washington State Ferries carries about 50% more people in the summertime months than it does in the wintertime months in a typical year. So, this is really our Super Bowl," explained WSF Public Information Officer Ian Sterling.

The alternate schedules are like playing the big game without half your starting lineup.

"We simply don't have the people to operate the vessels as often as we would like to," Sterling said.

There is a worldwide merchant mariner shortage.

"There was a shortage going into the pandemic, and it's been exacerbated coming out of it," explained Sterling.

Sterling said WSF has hired dozens of new crewmembers, but it takes time to train new employees for the highly technical job.

"Now we're rebuilding our schedule back to where it was pre-pandemic, but it's going to take some time and likely months before everything is back to, you know, more normal times," Sterling said.

WSF said the route changes would lead to "more predictable and reliable service systemwide" for customers. The agency said it plans to notify people when full service can temporarily be restored to a particular route.

Since active schedules may change daily, WSF urged customers to check the [online schedule page](#) and [monitor travel alert bulletins](#) on the agency's website for the latest route information.

As of July 11, WSF said the [following routes are running restored summer schedules](#):

- [Anacortes/San Juan Islands](#): Reservations available
- [Mukilteo/Clinton](#)
- [Edmonds/Kingston](#)
- [Seattle/Bainbridge Island](#)
- [Point Defiance/Tahlequah](#)

WSF said it has been able to restore some of the busiest routes.

"A lot of people take the San Juan Islands, you know, from Anacortes route, especially during the holidays or the summertime," Sterling said. "That's been restored to basically pre-pandemic service levels."

Other routes, like the Edmonds-Kingston route, will take longer to restore.

"This route here, Edmonds-Kingston, is the next to be scheduled to return to two boat service," said Sterling. "Right now, what we've done is cut that back to one [vessel]. We essentially guarantee that there's always going to be one-boat service. We'd like to get back to two, right? Because that doubles the capacity essentially cuts down on those wait times."



	<p>Birkby and Carrion said they are just glad they have the option to ride instead of drive.</p> <p>“It's not ideal, but it's what we have. So we might as well just go with it and enjoy it,” Birkby said.</p> <p>“At least there's something that connects the two peninsulas,” said Carrion.</p> <p>WSF advised riders to always check the schedule before heading to the ferry terminal. If WSF can get enough crew lined up, it will sometimes add a boat and extra sailings to the schedule.</p>
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<b>HEADLINE</b>	<b>07/11 Putin: Ukrainians path Russia citizenship</b>
<b>SOURCE</b>	<a href="https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/putin-decree-gives-all-ukrainians-path-russian-citizenship-2022-07-11/">https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/putin-decree-gives-all-ukrainians-path-russian-citizenship-2022-07-11/</a>
<b>GIST</b>	<p>MOSCOW, July 11 (Reuters) - Russian President Vladimir Putin signed a decree on Monday extending a simplified Russian naturalisation process to all citizens of Ukraine, a document published on the government's website showed.</p> <p>Previously, a simplified procedure for acquiring Russian citizenship applied only to residents of the self-proclaimed breakaway territories of the Donetsk People's Republic (DPR) and Luhansk People's Republic (LPR) in eastern Ukraine, which Russia seeks to "liberate" from Kyiv's control, as well as the Russian-occupied regions of Kherson and Zaporizhzhia, the state news agency TASS reported.</p>
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<b>HEADLINE</b>	<b>07/11 Starbucks closes stores for safety concerns</b>
<b>SOURCE</b>	<a href="https://www.seattletimes.com/business/starbucks/starbucks-to-close-5-seattle-stores-due-to-safety-concerns/">https://www.seattletimes.com/business/starbucks/starbucks-to-close-5-seattle-stores-due-to-safety-concerns/</a>
<b>GIST</b>	<p>Starbucks will close six Puget Sound-area stores where the company says crime rates have climbed recently as part of a broad initiative to boost security at the cafes.</p> <p>Five stores will close in Seattle — in the Central Area, on Capitol Hill and in the Roosevelt neighborhood, as well as at Union Station and Westlake Center — and one in Everett. In total, 16 U.S. stores will close by July 31, the company announced Monday.</p> <p>The closure decisions were based on how many crime-related complaints were logged at each store, a company spokesperson said, and whether attempts to lower those rates were successful. Going forward, store managers will be allowed to choose whether bathrooms are open to the public, and future stores will be redesigned for safety, the company said.</p> <p>Some of the safety concerns include drug use, theft and assault, a Starbucks spokesperson said.</p> <p>Workers at the stores that are closing can ask to be reassigned to neighboring stores, the company said. The stores at Union Station and East Olive Way are unionized, and employees who relocate to unionized stores will continue to be represented.</p> <p>Erin Bray, who works at Union Station, said that she asked for more security, including guards in the cafe lobby, after assaults occurred there.</p> <p>Starbucks said there is a full-time security guard at Union Station, with an additional security support worker at times. The cafe's hours were adjusted for safety and the store was closed on weekends.</p> <p>Bray said additional security wasn't hired, but that workers generally felt safe and never thought they needed to close the store.</p> <p>“I just feel helpless,” Bray said Monday, after learning her store would close.</p> <p>In addition to the 11802 Evergreen Way store in Everett, these Seattle stores will close:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2300 S. Jackson St.</li> </ul>

- 6417 Roosevelt Way N.E.
- 1600 E. Olive Way
- 505 Fifth Ave. S.
- 400 Pine St.

Labor law requires Starbucks to hold collective bargaining with workers at Union Station and East Olive Way before closing those cafes, Bray said. Workers can try to negotiate to keep the store open, Bray said, but it's an uphill battle.

"We're supposed to come to the table with proposals," Bray said. "And I don't know what we can propose realistically when it seems that fighting to keep the store open is a losing battle."

In a memo to employees Monday, Denise Nielsen and Debbie Stroud, Starbucks senior vice presidents for U.S. operations, said the changes are in response to crises around "personal safety, racism, lack of access to health care, a growing mental health crisis, rising drug use and more" that play out at Starbucks stores.

Interim CEO Howard Schultz, who has returned for a third stint as chief executive, said during a New York Times panel last month that Starbucks was considering closing cafe bathrooms to the public in response. Instead of a companywide policy, individual store managers will decide if bathrooms will remain open, the company said Monday.

Store layouts will be rearranged. New front-line workers will be trained on how to deal with active shooters and use conflict de-escalation, according to Starbucks. Workers will also receive more mental health benefits as they deal with difficult safety situations, the company said.

Redesigning for safety will include "adjusting store formats, furniture layouts, hours of operation, staffing, or testing store-specific solutions," according to the memo. Those fixes could include restroom occupancy sensors and new alarm systems, as well as paid Lyft rides for workers.

The changes align with five goals also announced Monday by Schultz aimed at "reinventing the Starbucks experience."

"We're seeing unprecedented cultural division and economic trauma — all while navigating a pandemic, and it seems as though every day there is a new crisis to address," Schultz wrote in a letter to employees.

The current Starbucks is not built for the future, said Camille Hymes, vice president of U.S. community impact.

"Consumer demands have changed. We recognize the external environment has changed, so we're responding to that with urgency," Hymes said.

In June, the company announced a "Heritage Market" initiative at three of Starbucks' most important stores in downtown Seattle. Each store would have a theme of past, present or future. One of the stores is in the petitioning process for union elections. The Workers United union has petitioned the National Labor Relations Board, arguing the Heritage Market is a union-busting tactic.

Bray said she is scared that if she moves to a nonunion store, she will lose the protections a union offers.

Starbucks said it will increase minimum hours to help ensure continuity for workers reassigned to other stores.

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HEADLINE	07/11 Tulalip Tribes sues Juul: 'deceptive' ads
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.seattletimes.com/business/tulalip-tribes-sues-juul-claiming-e-cigarette-maker-targeted-youth-with-deceptive-ads/">https://www.seattletimes.com/business/tulalip-tribes-sues-juul-claiming-e-cigarette-maker-targeted-youth-with-deceptive-ads/</a>

<p><b>GIST</b></p>	<p>The Tulalip Tribes of Washington are the latest plaintiffs to sue e-cigarette behemoth Juul Labs for targeting adolescents — including tribal youth — with misleading ads that downplayed the product’s addictive properties.</p> <p>The 316-page lawsuit, filed Thursday in U.S. District Court for Western Washington, alleges that Juul and its subsidiaries violated the federal Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations Act, also known as RICO, as well as Washington’s public nuisance laws. The tribes claim Juul engineered a fraudulent advertising campaign that transcended state boundaries and tribal sovereignty to profit from a new generation of people addicted to nicotine.</p> <p>The Food and Drug Administration <a href="#">ordered</a> Juul on June 23 to pull its products from the market only to <a href="#">be blocked a day later by a federal appeals court</a>. On Wednesday, the FDA <a href="#">suspended</a> its initial ban while it reopens its review of Juul’s e-cigarettes. The company can still sell its products during the review process.</p> <p>Juul faces a flurry of lawsuits, including a massive multidistrict case that combines over 2,000 individual suits. Just last year, Juul paid \$22.5 million to settle with a lawsuit from the state of Washington over a similar claim — that the company knowingly targeted teenagers with its products and misled the public about their addictive nature.</p> <p>The company admitted no wrongdoing and said it settled to “avoid further litigation.” The settlement with Washington followed two previous multimillion-dollar settlements in <a href="#">Arizona</a> and <a href="#">North Carolina</a>.</p> <p>In an April statement, Juul acknowledged the settlement was one step in a larger company “reset” and part of its effort to “resolve issues from the past.”</p> <p>“We support the Washington State Attorney General’s plan to deploy resources to address underage use, such as future monitoring and enforcement,” the statement said.</p> <p>The Tulalip lawsuit said e-cigarette use was “concerningly high” among tribal youth. The 2018 <a href="#">state health assessment</a> found that among Washington’s 10th graders, about a quarter of students who identified as “American Indian/Alaska Native” used e-cigarettes, which was a greater percentage than students of other ethnicities. Native students also smoked at higher rates than students of other ethnicities, the report found.</p> <p>In addition to Juul, the Tulalip suit names cigarette giants Altria and Phillip Morris as co-defendants, along with Juul’s founders, James Monsees and Adam Bowen, and investors Nicolas Pritzker, Huyoung Huh and Riaz Valani.</p> <p>“The Tulalip Tribes has filed suit to recover costs associated with the rising public health epidemic resulting from vaping and Juul’s marketing and sale of e-cigarettes to minors, and to recover the future expenditures that will be needed to address this problem,” Niki Cleary, a tribal spokesperson, said in an email to The Seattle Times.</p> <p>Representatives for Juul did not immediately respond to an emailed press inquiry.</p>
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<p><b>HEADLINE</b></p>	<p><b>07/11 Virologists track local spread monkeypox</b></p>
<p><b>SOURCE</b></p>	<p><a href="https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/health/uw-medicine-virologists-track-local-spread-of-monkeypox-as-more-wa-counties-see-infections/">https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/health/uw-medicine-virologists-track-local-spread-of-monkeypox-as-more-wa-counties-see-infections/</a></p>
<p><b>GIST</b></p>	<p>As new monkeypox infections continue to pop up in Washington, some state virologists are beginning to turn their attention toward tracking the virus’s spread.</p> <p>UW Medicine’s virology lab, the largest genomic sequencing lab in the state, has become one of the few in the country to establish testing for monkeypox, according to a Monday statement. The step comes as the</p>

state's number of monkeypox infections ticks up — totaling at least 16 cases as of last week, including the first infection in a [Snohomish County resident](#).

Over the weekend, Pierce County health officials [also reported](#) the county's first probable monkeypox case in a man in his 30s. He was not hospitalized and is recovering at home, according to a statement from the Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department.

“Our [lab’s] turnaround time is one to two days right now,” said Alex Greninger, an assistant professor of laboratory medicine at UW Medicine who helps run the virology lab. “This is something we do all the time, for lots and lots and lots of DNA viruses.”

The lab has been sequencing COVID-19 cases since the start of the pandemic and will continue to track the coronavirus locally, in addition to collecting data on monkeypox spread.

Health care providers can [order testing](#) through UW Medicine’s Department of Laboratory Medicine if they think a patient has been infected with monkeypox.

The state also expects to receive about 400 courses of the two-dose monkeypox vaccine through the federal government’s plan to distribute a limited amount of vaccines nationwide, [the state Department of Health said last week](#).

About 272 courses have already been distributed in parts of Washington with known cases and close contacts, the department added.

While early cases occurred in people who had traveled outside Washington, more recent cases have occurred in people who hadn’t traveled recently, meaning they were likely exposed to [monkeypox locally](#), King County public health officials said last week. Officials are working to conduct contact tracing and notify close contacts in these cases, according to the DOH.

Monkeypox can affect anyone, and those who are most at risk are those who have had close skin-to-skin contact with someone with monkeypox. In the recent surge, cases have been reported to be especially prevalent among men who have had close or intimate contact with other men, local health leaders have said, though the risk is not limited to men who have sex with men.

The vaccine can reduce the chance of developing an infection for those who have recently had close contact with someone who has tested positive.

According to the DOH, monkeypox can cause flulike symptoms, swollen lymph nodes and a rash that can appear anywhere on the body. Most recently, people had lesions on the genitals or in the anal area sometimes with or without flulike symptoms, the health authority said.

Anyone who has symptoms of monkeypox or has been in close contact with someone who has been diagnosed should see a health care provider.

Most cases do not require hospitalization and to date, no one in the U.S. has died from the virus. People typically recover within two to four weeks but more serious cases can arise for immunocompromised people, children, people with eczema or who are pregnant or breastfeeding.

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HEADLINE	07/11 Hospital gown falls short safety standards?
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.seattletimes.com/nation-world/widely-used-hospital-gowns-show-signs-of-exposing-workers-to-infection/">https://www.seattletimes.com/nation-world/widely-used-hospital-gowns-show-signs-of-exposing-workers-to-infection/</a>
GIST	Disposable gowns designed to deflect the splatter of bodily fluids, used in thousands of U.S. hospitals, have underperformed in recent and ongoing laboratory tests and may fall short of safety standards, leaving health care workers with a greater risk of infection than advertised.

A [peer-reviewed academic study](#), published to little notice amid the coronavirus pandemic, found that isolation gowns commonly worn in medical units or intensive care units ripped too easily and allowed about four to 14 times the expected amount of liquid to seep through when sprayed or splashed.

“I’m amazed that facilities are using them,” said study co-author Elizabeth Easter, a textile expert at the University of Kentucky, of the thinnest disposable gowns. “Because, technically, you can see through the fabric.”

Now a similar study is underway at ECRI, a nonprofit focused on health care safety, which began testing disposable isolation gowns after receiving anecdotal reports of “blood or other body fluids leaking through,” said ECRI Engineering Director Chris Lavanchy. He told KHN that preliminary test results raised concerns that disposable gowns may not meet safety standards.

Isolation gowns are worn by hospital workers to cover their torso and arms before entering rooms of contagious patients, blocking the spray of fluids that could otherwise cling to workers’ clothing and end up in their eyes or mouth. Germs are thought to rarely seep through gowns and sicken the wearer, but with gowns used constantly in hospitals every day, even a small gap in protection could be magnified millions of times over.

“It’s an expected principle of infection control that you don’t want that body fluid getting through,” Lavanchy said. “A very reasonable expectation is that if you do get liquids through, there is a risk.”

Lavanchy declined to provide more details about ECRI’s findings, stressing that testing is ongoing. The organization is in discussions with gown companies that will get a chance to question or dispute the findings in advance of a full report’s release, planned for later this year. Neither ECRI nor the academic study identified the specific gowns or brands that were tested, but officials involved with both studies said the gowns were purchased from some of the primary suppliers of U.S. hospitals.

KHN reached out to three of the largest suppliers of hospital gowns for comment. None responded.

The testing of isolation gowns comes as the coronavirus pandemic has dramatically heightened concerns about infection control in hospitals and the limitations of supply chains for personal protective equipment, including gowns. Disposable gowns were [a scarce resource](#) in the first year of the pandemic, forcing some nurses to [resort to wearing trash bags](#) and some hospitals to hurriedly buy from manufacturers with no gown experience or [foreign suppliers](#) that did not meet U.S. standards. ECRI testing showed that many of these gowns offered lackluster protection, which drew attention to the lack of quality control in the gown industry, ultimately motivating the organization’s current testing of gowns from more traditional suppliers.

Supply shortages and questions about the quality of disposable gowns may persuade some hospitals to reconsider reusable isolation gowns, which can be laundered about 75 times. A [handful of studies and pilot programs](#) suggest reusable gowns offer at least as much protection and lower costs and are [far better for the environment](#). Additionally, reusable gowns have been readily available throughout the pandemic, allowing hospitals to avoid supply shortages and surging prices.

Inova Health System, near Washington, D.C., transitioned two of its hospitals to reusable gowns in 2021 to insulate itself from supply chain woes and hopes to introduce the gowns at its remaining three facilities by the end of this year. Before the change, Inova used about 3 million disposable gowns in a year, creating 213 tons of waste, company officials said.

“There was a lot of trial and error going through this process,” said Michelle Peninger, Inova’s assistant vice president of infection prevention and control. “But it will all pay off in the end.”

Chana Luria, who has worked as a nurse in California for about 30 years, said she has long preferred the washable gowns that were common in the first decade of her career. They felt thicker, safer, and far less

wasteful, she said. Fluid that splashed onto those gowns would slide to the floor — sometimes creating a slipping hazard — but never seeped through to her clothes or skin, she said.

Many nurses favor disposable gowns because they have a reputation for being cooler and more breathable, Luria said, but infection control should be prioritized over comfort. “I would rather be sweating in a Hefty bag and have some sort of actual protection,” Luria said. “It’s called personal protective equipment. If it doesn’t protect you, it’s a waste of time.”

#### **‘We were spending millions of dollars on gowns’**

Regardless of whether they are washed or trashed, isolation gowns are often worn for mere minutes.

And all those minutes add up. At UCLA Health, a four-hospital chain in the Los Angeles area that transitioned to reusable gowns over the past decade, a single liver transplant unit once used as many as 1,000 disposable gowns a day, said Norm Lantz, senior director of general services. “We were spending millions of dollars on gowns,” Lantz said. “And then we realized, of all that money, what we were buying was filling landfills.”

Most isolation gowns are classified as either “level one” gowns, designed to be worn in standard medical units and during basic care, or slightly thicker “level two” gowns, which are worn in ICUs and during blood draws and suturing, according to the FDA. The agency recognizes standards for isolation gowns created by three organizations — the [American National Standards Institute](#), the [Association for the Advancement of Medical Instrumentation](#) and [ASTM International](#) — but there is no independent check to ensure gowns adhere to these standards.

Unlike surgical gowns, which are subjected to more scrutiny, isolation gowns are classified by the FDA as low-risk medical devices that are exempt from government review before sale. Gown companies are largely responsible for their own quality control.

But disposable isolation gowns fell far short of industry standards in the recent academic study, conducted by Easter and a textile-testing expert at Florida State University and published in the American Journal of Infection Control in 2021. The tests were performed in 2018, before pandemic shortages eroded the quality of available gowns.

To test the gowns’ ability to repel bodily fluids, the researchers sprayed them with water using something akin to a showerhead and determined whether the weight of the blotter paper on the other side of the protective material increased.

Level one disposable gowns were found to let through an average of 16.2 grams of liquid, much more than the 4.5-gram standard, according to the study. Level two disposable gowns averaged 13.5 grams but were supposed to let through no more than 1 gram.

Both levels of disposable gowns also failed to meet a standard for tensile strength, which was not recognized by the FDA at the time of testing but has been since. The gowns were expected to withstand at least 7 pounds of force. But when pressure was applied widthwise, the level one gowns broke with less than 1 pound of force, and the level two gowns broke with less than 5, according to the study.

Several brands of reusable gowns passed both tests by comfortable margins, even after being laundered 75 times.

Meredith McQuerry, supervisor of Florida State’s Textile Testing Lab, who co-authored the study, said the failures of disposable gowns demonstrate the effect of standards “not being fully enforced.”

“One hundred percent this should not only constitute further study,” she said. “It most definitely should cause some alarm in the medical profession in terms of PPE concerns.”



Now, ECRI is undertaking a separate study in its Philadelphia laboratory that will repeat the tests of the academic one. In addition, ECRI said it will launch a survey through which health care workers can report gown failures. The organization also named “insufficient” disposable gowns one of its “[top 10 health technology hazards for 2022](#).”

Tim Browne, ECRI’s vice president of supply chain solutions, said alarms began to sound amid the supply shortages at the start of the pandemic as desperate hospitals turned to gowns of questionable quality, often imported from Chinese companies.

In 2020, ECRI tested 34 gown models from foreign and “non-traditional” suppliers and found that about half the gowns did not meet their claimed protection level and half failed to meet even the lowest standard, according to documents provided by the organization.

“There was more fraudulent product in the marketplace than ever,” Browne said, “and that’s what really raised the level of concern from a quality standpoint.”

#### **‘We weren’t wearing trash bags’**

Although the supply chain issues of 2020 triggered doubts about disposable gowns, they were reaffirming for hospitals that years ago transitioned to reusable alternatives.

Officials at UCLA Health and Carilion Clinic, a seven-hospital chain based in Virginia, both of which are outspoken proponents of reusable gowns, said they had no shortages and simply laundered faster to keep up with pandemic demand.

The hospital groups also said they were insulated from surge pricing, which at times drove the cost of a single disposable gown from about 80 cents to nearly \$3.

Lantz said UCLA Health had prevented approximately 1,200 tons of waste and now saves \$450,000 a year after transitioning its inpatient units and emergency rooms to reusable gowns.

At Carilion Clinic, reusable gowns were saving the hospitals about 40 cents per use even before the pandemic, said Jim Buchbinder, the company’s director of laundry services.

“Forty cents a gown when we’re using 120,000 gowns a week during the pandemic — that’s substantial,” Buchbinder said. “Plus, we had them to wear. We weren’t wearing trash bags at Carilion.”

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HEADLINE	07/11 BA.5 the ‘reinfection wave’?
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.msn.com/en-us/news/us/why-ba-5-feels-different/ar-AAZsJll">https://www.msn.com/en-us/news/us/why-ba-5-feels-different/ar-AAZsJll</a>
GIST	<p>Well, here we go again. Once more, the ever-changing coronavirus behind COVID-19 is assaulting the United States in a new guise—BA.5, an offshoot of the Omicron variant that devastated the most recent winter. The new variant is spreading quickly, likely because it snakes past some of the immune defenses acquired by vaccinated people, or those infected by earlier variants. Those who have managed to avoid the virus for close to three years will find it a little harder to continue that streak, and some who recently caught COVID are getting it again. “People shouldn’t be surprised if they get infected, and they shouldn’t be surprised if it’s pretty unpleasant,” Stephen Goldstein, a virologist at the University of Utah, told me.</p> <p>That doesn’t mean we’re about to have a surge on the scale of what we saw last winter, or that BA.5 (and its close cousin BA.4) will set us back to immunological square one. Goldstein told me that he takes “some level of comfort” in the knowledge that, based on how other countries have fared against BA.5, vaccines are still keeping a lot of people out of hospitals, intensive-care units, and morgues. The new variant is not an apocalyptic menace.</p> <p>But it can’t be ignored, either. Infections (and reinfections) still matter, and by increasing both, BA.5 is extending and deepening the pandemic’s ongoing burden. “We will not prevent all transmission—that is</p>

not the goal—but we have to reduce the spread,” Maria Van Kerkhove, an infectious-disease epidemiologist at the World Health Organization, told me. “It’s not over, and we are playing with fire by letting this virus circulate at such intense levels.”

The age of Omicron began shortly after Thanksgiving, as the new variant swept through the U.S., ousting its predecessor, Delta. That initial version of Omicron, now known as BA.1, was just the first of a mini-dynasty of related variants that have since competed against one another in a grim game of succession. BA.2 took over from BA.1, and caused a surge in the spring. BA.4 and BA.5 are spreading even more quickly: [First detected in South Africa in January and February](#), they have since [displaced BA.2](#) all over the world, leading to surges in [both cases and hospitalizations](#). In the U.S., BA.5 now accounts for about [54 percent of all COVID infections](#), and BA.4, about another 17 percent. (Most of this article will deal with BA.5 alone because it already seems to be outcompeting its cousin.) [Hospitalizations have risen](#) to their highest level since March.

You might assume that a new variant gains dominance by being inherently more transmissible than its forerunners. Using that logic, buttressed by some [back-of-the-envelope calculations](#), some commentators have claimed that BA.5 is as transmissible as measles, making it among the most contagious viral diseases in history. But those calculations are “fully wrong,” Trevor Bedford, a virologist at the Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center, told me. Variants can spread rapidly without being any better at finding new hosts, as long as they’re better at *slipping past those hosts’ immune defenses*. That property—immune evasion—likely enabled BA.1 to oust Delta last winter. It might also explain why BA.5 is rising now.

When people are vaccinated or infected, they develop antibodies that can neutralize the coronavirus by sticking to its spike proteins—the studs on its surface that the pathogen uses to recognize and infect our cells. But BA.4 and BA.5 have several mutations that change the shape of their spikes, which, like swords that no longer fit their sheaths, are now unrecognizable to many antibodies that would have disarmed older variants. That’s [why, as many studies have now consistently shown](#), antibodies from triple-vaccinated people, or people who had breakthrough infections with earlier variants, are three to four times less potent at neutralizing BA.4 or BA.5 than BA.1 or BA.2. This means that most people are now less protected against infection than they were two months ago—and that some people who got COVID very recently are getting reinfected now. “I hear from a lot of people who just had COVID in February, March, or April and now have it again,” Anne Hahn, a virologist and immunologist at Yale, told me.

As my colleague Katherine J. Wu has reported, [the consequences of reinfections are still unclear](#). It’s unlikely that each subsequent bout of COVID is worse for an individual than the previous one; this idea has [proliferated](#) because of a [recent preprint](#), which really only showed that getting reinfected is worse than *not being reinfected*. Nor should people worry that, as one [viral news article](#) recently suggested, “it is now possible to be reinfected with one of Omicron’s variants every two to three weeks.” BA.5 is different from its forebears but *not from itself*; although someone could catch the new variant despite having recently had COVID, they’d be very unlikely to get infected again in the near future.

Though previous immunity has been dialed down a few notches, since BA.5 showed up, it hasn’t disappeared entirely. “We’re seeing that new infections are disproportionately people who haven’t been infected before,” Meaghan Kall, an epidemiologist at the U.K. Health Security Agency, told me. About 70 percent of those who currently have COVID in England [are first-timers](#), even though they account for just 15 percent of the country’s population. This clearly shows that although reinfections are a serious problem, the population still has some protection against catching even BA.5.

The degree to which the new variant escapes immunity is also a shadow of what we saw last winter, when Omicron first arrived. For comparison, antibodies in vaccinated people were 20 to 40 times worse at neutralizing BA.1 than the original coronavirus. BA.5 reduces their efficiency threefold again—a small gain of sneakiness on top of its predecessor’s dramatic flair for infiltration. “BA.5 is doing what Omicron does but with a marginally more effective immune evasion,” Kall told me. “I don’t believe that it represents a massive paradigm shift.”

Why, then, does it *feel* like we're in a reinfection wave right now, with anecdotal reports being prominent in a way they weren't seven months ago? It's because Omicron completely changed our baseline. Before its arrival, [only a third of Americans had ever experienced COVID](#). By the end of February, almost 60 percent had. We're hearing more about reinfections now in part because the number of people who could possibly be reinfected has doubled.

BA.5's impact on society will differ greatly around the world. Both South Africa and the U.K. have experienced only small rises in hospitalizations and deaths despite surging BA.5 cases, showing that "protection from vaccines against severe disease and death is still really strong," Kall said. Portugal hasn't been so lucky, with deaths climbing to levels that approach those of the first Omicron surge. These differences should be expected. On top of their demographic differences, countries are now complicated patchworks of immunity; citizens vary in how many times they've been infected or vaccinated, which vaccines they've gotten, and which variants they've encountered.

Still, it's possible to predict what might happen as BA.5 ascends in the U.S. by looking at its effective reproduction number, or  $R_t$ —the average number of people whom each infected person then infects. The original version of Omicron, BA.1, "came in really hot," Trevor Bedford told me. With an initial  $R_t$  of between 3 and 3.5, he estimates that it infected almost half the country in a few months, including 3 million to 4 million people a day at its peak. (These numbers are higher than the official counts, which have always been underestimates.) BA.2 was less ferocious: With an initial  $R_t$  of 1.6, it infected about one in 10 Americans in the spring, and peaked at roughly 500,000 daily infections. BA.4 and BA.5 have a slightly higher  $R_t$  but should "mostly mirror the BA.2 epidemic," Bedford told me. It might not look that way on recent charts of new cases, where the close overlap between BA.4/BA.5's rise and BA.2's decline creates "the illusion of a plateau," Bedford said, but the U.S. is nonetheless experiencing its third Omicron surge. He expects BA.5 to infect 10 to 15 percent of Americans over the next few months.

Of course, *it doesn't have to*. The Biden administration, [other political leaders](#), and many media figures have promoted [laxer COVID policies](#), on the grounds that vaccines are still reducing the risk of death and hospitalization. But this stance is foolish for several reasons.

Even if the infection-fatality ratio for COVID—the risk that an infected person will die—[falls to the level of seasonal flu](#), rare events stack up when the virus is allowed to spread unchecked. Bedford estimates that in such a scenario, COVID could still plausibly kill 100,000 Americans every year, "which is a lot!" he said. "It's not like in the peak of the pandemic, but it's a major health burden." That burden is still mainly borne by the elderly; low-income workers; [Black, Latino, and Indigenous Americans](#); and [immunocompromised people](#). The entire Omicron dynasty may well have arisen from [chronic infections](#) in immunocompromised patients, in whose bodies the virus [can evolve more rapidly](#), which suggests a self-interested case for preventing infections in this group, along with the more obvious moral rationale.

Death isn't the only outcome that matters, either. Even without sending people to the hospital, infections can lead to the persistent and in many cases disabling symptoms of [long COVID](#)—a risk that [vaccines seem to lower](#) but not fully avert. "I'm not worried about dying from COVID, but I'm personally cautious because of worries about long COVID," Bedford told me. "I'm not a hermit, but I'm taking mitigation measures to try not to get sick." And even "mild" infections can still be awful. Dan Barouch, an infectious-disease specialist at Harvard Medical School, told me that friends and colleagues have "felt pretty terrible at home, sometimes for weeks, but weren't sick enough to go to the ICU and get intubated. There's a lot of time missed from school and work." Waves of sick employees are still disrupting sectors that were already reeling from [the Great Resignation](#)—including the health-care system. [An exodus of experienced colleagues](#) and [untenable levels of burnout](#) have trapped health-care workers [in a chronic state of crisis](#), which persists even when hospitalization numbers are low, and deepens whenever the numbers climb.

Preventing infections still matters, and vaccines are still a crucial means of doing so. After a frustrating delay, [Omicron-specific boosters are on the way](#), and the FDA has recommended that these [include components of BA.4 and BA.5](#). The updated shots won't be ready until October at the earliest, by which time new variants could have arisen. But "even if we don't nail the match exactly," Goldstein said, these

boosters should expand people's antibody repertoire, leaving them better defended against not just the Omicron dynasty but also other variants that could follow. Still, "it's important not to overpromise the efficacy of Omicron-specific boosters," Barouch said. In terms of preventing infections, [clinical data](#) suggest that they'll be modestly better than current vaccines, but not substantially so. And even if we get the long-desired [shots that protect against all coronaviruses](#), it may be [difficult to persuade Americans to get them](#).

Vaccines were never going to end the pandemic [on their own](#). They needed to be complemented by other protective measures such as masks, better ventilation, rapid tests, and social support like paid sick leave, which were either insufficiently deployed or rolled back. And with [stalled COVID funding](#) jeopardizing supplies of tests, treatments, and vaccines, the U.S. will continue its long streak of being underprepared for new variants.

[Consider BA.2.75](#), another member of the Omicron family, which has many spike mutations not seen in its cousins. In India, where that subvariant was first identified, it seems to be spreading at a rate double that of BA.5 and comparable to that of BA.1, Bedford told me. This worrying picture is based on a small number of samples, and BA.2.75's actual pace may be slower. It may also struggle to spread in places like the U.S., where BA.5 already rules. But no matter what happens, this round of variants won't be the last we contend with.

The belief that viruses inevitably evolve into milder versions [is a myth](#): Such futures are possible [but in no way guaranteed](#). The coronavirus could yet [evolve into more severe variants](#), although vaccines would still be expected to blunt their sting. It could become even more contagious, although the traits that would give it a speed boost, such as higher viral loads or tighter attachments to human cells, can't ratchet up forever. "It's already super-transmissible, and there's not much to gain there," Anne Hahn told me.

Immune evasion is another matter. The virus is likely now locked with the human immune system in a perpetual evolutionary arms race. A variant emerges to circumvent our existing immunity, then vaccines and infections gradually rebuild our defenses ... until another variant emerges. This is exactly what happens with flu, but the coronavirus seems to be changing even more quickly. The big uncertainty is whether the next variants will erode immunity to the small degrees that scientists expect (as BA.5 is doing) or whether they'll do something dramatic and unexpected (as BA.1 did). This is what "living with COVID" means—a continual cat-and-mouse game that we can choose to play seriously or repeatedly forfeit.

The stakes of that game depend on a very simple question: *Should we still care about preventing infections?* If the answer is "not so much," which is the implicit and sometimes explicit posture that America's leaders have adopted, then BA.5 changes little. But if the answer is "yes," as I and most of the experts I talk to still believe, then BA.5 is a problem.

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HEADLINE	<b>07/11 Homebuyers canceling deals at highest rate</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.cnbc.com/2022/07/11/homebuyers-are-canceling-deals-at-highest-rate-since-start-of-covid.html">https://www.cnbc.com/2022/07/11/homebuyers-are-canceling-deals-at-highest-rate-since-start-of-covid.html</a>
GIST	<p>Americans are canceling deals to buy homes at the highest rate since the start of <a href="#">the Covid pandemic</a>.</p> <p>The share of sale agreements on existing homes canceled in June was just under 15% of all homes that went under contract, according to a new report from <a href="#">Redfin</a>. That is the highest share since early 2020, when homebuying paused immediately, albeit briefly. Cancellations were at about 11% one year ago.</p> <p>Higher mortgage rates and surging inflation are causing many potential homebuyers to reconsider their purchases.</p>

The average rate on the 30-year fixed mortgage started this year around 3% and then began rising steadily. It briefly shot above 6% in mid-June before settling in a narrow range around 5.75% now, according to [Mortgage News Daily](#).

Higher mortgage rates have also caused some borrowers to [no longer qualify for the loans they want](#). Lenders generally use a front-end debt-to-income ratio of about 28% as the ceiling for home loans. The costs of owning a median-priced home in the second quarter required 31.5% of the average U.S. wage, according to a report by Attom, a property data provider. That's the highest percentage since 2007 and up from 24% the year before, marking the biggest jump in more than two decades.

Buyers are also seeing the once red-hot market turn around quickly and dramatically. They may no longer see the urgency in bidding for a home that they feel might depreciate in the coming year.

"The slowdown in housing-market competition is giving homebuyers room to negotiate, which is one reason more of them are backing out of deals," said Taylor Marr, Redfin's deputy chief economist. "Buyers are increasingly keeping rather than waiving inspection and appraisal contingencies. That gives them the flexibility to call the deal off if issues arise during the homebuying process."

Homebuilders are also seeing higher cancellation rates. Even before the sharpest increase in rates in June, cancellations in May jumped to 9.3% in a survey of builders by John Burns Real Estate Consulting. That compares with 6.6% in May 2021.

"Buyer's remorse and cancellations shortly after contract are increasing. Builders state buyers are nervous about a potential recession, struggling to get comfortable with higher payments, or expecting home prices to decline," said Jody Kahn, senior vice president at JBREC. Kahn also noted that in her mid-June survey she continued to see cancellations on the rise.

[Lennar](#), one of the nation's largest homebuilders, said in its most recent quarterly earnings report that its cancellation rate did increase sequentially to 11.8% but was below its long-term historical average. It also reported increasing its incentives to make up for falling demand, due to rising interest rates.

"It seems that these trends will harden as the Fed continues to tighten until inflation subsides. While we can choose to fight against the trend, the reality is that the market has been changing and we are getting ahead of it by making all necessary adjustments," said Lennar Chairman Stuart Miller in the release.

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HEADLINE	<b>07/12 Euro, US dollar reach parity: one for one</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.cnn.com/2022/07/12/investing/euro-dollar-parity/index.html">https://www.cnn.com/2022/07/12/investing/euro-dollar-parity/index.html</a>
GIST	<p><b>New York (CNN Business)</b>For the first time in 20 years, the exchange rate between the euro (<a href="#">EUU</a>) and the US dollar has reached parity -- meaning the two currencies are worth the same.</p> <p>The <a href="#">euro hit \$1</a> on Tuesday, down about 12% since the start of the year. Fears of recession on the Continent abound, stoked by high inflation and energy supply uncertainty caused by Russia's invasion of Ukraine.</p> <p>The European Union, which received <a href="#">roughly 40% of its gas through Russian pipelines</a> before the war, is attempting to reduce its dependence on Russian oil and gas. At the same, Russia has throttled back gas supplies to some EU countries and recently cut the flow in the Nord Stream pipeline to Germany by 60%.</p> <p>Now that critical piece of gas import infrastructure in Europe, has been <a href="#">shut down for scheduled maintenance</a> due to last 10 days. German officials fear that it may not be turned on again.</p> <p>The energy crisis comes alongside an economic slowdown, which has cast doubts over whether the European Central Bank can adequately tighten policy to bring down inflation. The ECB announced that it will hike interest rates this month for the first time since 2011, as the eurozone inflation rate sits at 8.6%.</p>



But some say the ECB is far behind the curve, and that a hard landing is all but inevitable. Germany recorded its first trade deficit in goods since 1991 last week as fuel prices and general supply chain chaos significantly increased the price of imports.

"Given the nature of Germany's exports which are commodity-price sensitive, it remains hard to imagine that the trade balance could improve significantly from here in the next few months given the expected slowdown in the eurozone economy," Saxo Bank foreign exchange strategists wrote in a recent note.

A series of aggressive interest rate hikes by central banks, including the Fed, coupled with slowing economic growth will keep pressure on the euro while sending investors toward the US dollar as a safe haven, say analysts.

The US Federal Reserve is well ahead of Europe on tightening, having hiked interest rates by 75 basis points while indicating that more rate increases will come this month.

This safe haven retreat into the US dollar could become even more extreme if Europe and the US enters a recession, warned Deutsche Global Head of FX Research George Saravelos in a note last week.

A situation where the euro is trading below the US dollar at a range of \$0.95 to \$0.97 could "well be reached," wrote Saravelos, "if both Europe and the US find themselves slip-sliding in to a (deeper) recession in Q3 while the Fed is still hiking rates."

That's good news for Americans with plans to visit Europe this summer but could spell bad news for economic global stability.

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HEADLINE	<b>07/11 Subvariants threaten Covid resurgence</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://abcnews.go.com/Health/omicron-subvariants-threaten-covid-19-resurgence-us/story?id=86611325">https://abcnews.go.com/Health/omicron-subvariants-threaten-covid-19-resurgence-us/story?id=86611325</a>
GIST	<p>Health officials are once again raising the alarm about the threat of a resurgence of COVID-19 infections across the country, as concerns grow about the new omicron subvariant, BA.5, which is now the dominant viral strain in the U.S.</p> <p>The BA.5 variant, first detected in South Africa earlier this year, is currently estimated to account for more than half -- 53.6% -- of all new COVID-19 cases in the states, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.</p> <p>BA.5 appears to have a growth advantage over the original omicron variant, according to the World Health Organization, and scientists are closely monitoring the increase in reported cases observed in many countries across the globe.</p> <p>At this time, BA.5 does not appear to have increased in severity, but officials have previously stressed that research on the new subvariant is still in its "early days," and much remains to be learned about it.</p> <p>As BA.5 spreads, a growing proportion of U.S. counties are seeing increases in infections and related hospital admissions.</p> <p>Nearly three-quarters of the U.S. population is now living in a county with a high or medium community risk level for COVID-19, as defined by the CDC, federal data shows. About one-third of those people -- 31.9%-- are living in a high-risk community, while 41.6% are living in a medium-risk county.</p> <p>A high community level suggests there is a "high potential for health care system strain" and a "high level of severe disease," and the CDC recommends that people wear a mask in public indoor settings, including schools. A medium-risk level suggests there is "some impact on [the] health care system," and "more</p>



people with severe disease." Under the CDC's official guidance, individuals considered at "increased risk" are advised to speak with their health care provider about whether to wear a mask.

Counties on both coasts -- most notably in California, Montana, New Mexico and Oregon -- are moving up and entering the high-risk level. In Florida, nearly every county is currently considered high risk. Puerto Rico and California currently lead the nation in new cases per capita, followed by New York City, where officials are once again urging residents to wear high-quality masks in indoor public settings and around crowds outside, amid a renewed surge of infections in the city.

"We're currently seeing high levels of COVID-19 in NYC. To help slow the spread, all New Yorkers should wear a high-quality mask, such as an N95, KN95 or KF94 in all public indoor settings and around crowds outside," the New York City Health Department wrote in a tweet on Friday, after the city moved back into the high-risk level.

The average number of new cases across New York City is up by 25% in the last two weeks, according to federal data. City data also shows that an average of 15% of reported tests are now coming back positive, marking the highest seven-day positivity rate in months.

Nationally, the country is currently reporting an average of more than 100,000 new cases each day. However, health officials say that the total is likely significantly undercounted.

As previously reported, dozens of states have moved to shutter public testing sites, with more at-home COVID-19 tests now available in pharmacies and through the federal testing program. Most Americans are not reporting their results to officials, and, thus, experts said infection totals are likely significantly undercounted.

Last week, White House COVID Response Coordinator Dr. Ashish Jha told NBC News that hundreds of thousands of COVID-19 infections are likely going undercounted.

"There's no question in my mind we are missing the vast majority of infections right now," Jha said. "The truth is there are probably several hundred thousand -- 400,000; 500,000 infections a day happening across the country."

The concerns over BA.5 come amid the nation's continued push to get people vaccinated. Although the U.S. is set to roll out new bivalent vaccines in the fall, which will address omicron, millions of eligible Americans are still without their additional shots.

To date, less than half of eligible Americans -- 49.5% or 108.6 million people -- have received their first booster. Similarly, less than one-third -- 29.5% or 42.2 million -- of eligible Americans over the age of 50 have received their second booster.

Overall hospitalization numbers and death rates have yet to see a significant resurgence, though experts say metrics may also be undercounted, due to a lack of reporting from states.

As of July 5, about 34,000 patients are currently receiving care in U.S. hospitals across the country. This still marks one of the highest numbers of patients hospitalized with the virus since March.

On average, more than 5,200 virus-positive Americans are entering the hospital each day -- the highest number of daily admissions since February. Hospital admissions in the Southwest and the South are up by more than 10%, respectively, in the past week.

The average number of daily COVID-19-related deaths remains just below 300 reported each day. Totals are still much lower than during prior COVID-19 surges.

However, thousands of Americans are still losing their lives every week. Over the last seven days, the U.S. has reported nearly 2,000 deaths.

HEADLINE	<b>07/12 Ukraine targets Russia ammo depot</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/ukrainian-rocket-strike-targets-russian-ammunition-depot-86649095">https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/ukrainian-rocket-strike-targets-russian-ammunition-depot-86649095</a>
GIST	<p>KYIV, Ukraine -- A Russian ammunition depot was apparently targeted by Ukrainian forces overnight, resulting in a massive blast captured on social media.</p> <p>The Ukrainian military's southern command said the rocket strike targeted the depot in Russian-held Nova Kakhovka, about 35 miles (55 kilometers) east of the important Black Sea port city of Kherson, which is also occupied by Russian forces.</p> <p>Video on social media showed a massive explosion. The nature of the strike suggested that Ukrainian forces used U.S-supplied multiple-launch High Mobility Artillery Rocket Systems, or HIMARS, to strike the area.</p> <p>Russia's Tass news agency offered a different account, saying that the target was a mineral fertilizer storage facility that exploded, and that a market, hospital and houses were damaged. Some of the ingredients in fertilizer can be used for ammunition.</p> <p>Ukrainian authorities also said that Russian fire struck the southern city of Mykolaiv on Tuesday morning, hitting two medical facilities and residential buildings. Four people were wounded in the shelling attack, Mykolaiv regional governor Vitaliy Kim said on Telegram.</p> <p>Air raid sirens sounded early Tuesday morning in the western city of Lviv and other areas of Ukraine as Russian forces continued to make advances.</p> <p>According to a Tuesday intelligence briefing from the British military, Russia is continuing to make "small, incremental gains" in Ukraine's eastern Donetsk region, where heavy fighting led the province's governor last week to urge its 350,000 remaining residents to move to safer places in western Ukraine.</p> <p>Yet many in the Donbas, a fertile industrial region in eastern Ukraine made of the Donetsk and Luhansk provinces, refuse — or are unable — to flee, despite scores of civilians being killed and wounded each week.</p> <p>The death toll in a Russian rocket attack that struck an apartment building in eastern Ukraine on Saturday has risen to 34. The head of the Donetsk regional military administration, Pavlo Kyrylenko, made the announcement on social media, saying nine wounded people had been recovered from the building in Chasiv Yar.</p> <p>The British intelligence briefing said Russia had seized the Ukrainian town of Hryhorivka and continued to push toward the Donetsk province cities of Kramatorsk and Sloviansk.</p> <p>"Russian forces are likely maintaining military pressure on Ukrainian forces whilst regrouping and reconstituting for further offensives in the near future," the intelligence briefing said.</p> <p>However, Russia may be relying more heavily on private forces, like the Wagner mercenary group, to avoid a general mobilization, the British said.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>07/11 US: will defend ally if China breaks sea rule</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/us-warns-defend-ally-china-breaks-sea-ruling-86645995">https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/us-warns-defend-ally-china-breaks-sea-ruling-86645995</a>
GIST	MANILA, Philippines -- U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken renewed a call to China to comply with a 2016 arbitration ruling that invalidated Beijing's vast claims in the South China Sea and warned that

Washington is obligated to defend treaty ally Philippines if its forces, vessels or aircraft come under attack in the disputed waters.

Blinken's statement, issued by the U.S. Embassy in Manila on Tuesday, was released on the sixth anniversary of the 2016 decision by an arbitration tribunal set up in The Hague under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea after the Philippine government complained in 2013 against China's increasingly aggressive actions in the disputed sea.

China did not participate in the arbitration, rejected its ruling as a sham and continues to defy it, bringing it into territorial spats with the Philippines and other Southeast Asian claimant states in recent years.

"We call again on the PRC to abide by its obligations under international law and cease its provocative behavior," Blinken said, using the acronym of China's formal name.

"We also reaffirm that an armed attack on Philippine armed forces, public vessels, or aircraft in the South China Sea would invoke U.S. mutual defense commitments" under the 1951 U.S.-Philippines Mutual Defense Treaty, Blinken said.

Aside from China and the Philippines, Vietnam, Malaysia, Taiwan and Brunei have had overlapping claims in the busy waterway, which is believed to be rich in undersea gas and oil deposits and where an estimated \$5 trillion-worth of trade and goods are shipped through each year.

The flashpoint region has become a key front of U.S.-China rivalry.

Washington lays no claim to the disputed waters but has deployed its Navy ships and Air Force jets to patrol the waterway for decades and says freedom of navigation and overflight in the disputed region is in the U.S. national interest. That has provoked angry reactions from China, which has accused the U.S. of meddling in a purely Asian dispute and warned it to stay away.

Philippine Foreign Secretary Enrique Manalo said Tuesday that the arbitration ruling would be a pillar of the new administration's policy and actions in the disputed region and rejected attempts to undermine the "indisputable" decision.

"These findings are no longer within the reach of denial and rebuttal and are conclusive as they are indisputable. The award is final," Manalo said in a statement.

"We firmly reject attempts to undermine it ... even erase it from law, history and our collective memories," said Manalo, who did not name China but clearly alluded to it.

China would likely frown on the policy stance declared by Manalo for the administration of President Ferdinand Marcos Jr., who took office June 30 after a landslide electoral victory.

Marcos Jr.'s predecessor, Rodrigo Duterte, put the arbitration ruling in the backburner for years after he took office in 2016 and nurtured cozy ties with Chinese President Xi Jinping while often criticizing U.S. security policies.

In 2019, Duterte said he finally asked Xi in a meeting in Beijing to comply with the ruling but was flatly told by the Chinese leader: "We will not budge."

Marcos Jr. has upheld the arbitration ruling and said he would not allow even one "square millimeter" of Philippine waters to be trampled upon.

But in an interview with DZRH radio network in January before he won the presidency, Marcos Jr. said since China has refused to recognize the ruling, it won't help settle disputes with Beijing, "so that option is not available to us."

	<p>Marcos Jr. said then that Duterte's policy of diplomatic engagement with China is "really our only option."</p> <p>He faced calls Tuesday to ask China to comply with the arbitration ruling and reverse Duterte's soft approach that undermined Philippine sovereignty in the disputed sea.</p> <p>Dozens of left-activists and laborers protested in front of the Chinese Consulate in Manila's Makati financial district Tuesday, asking Beijing to respect the arbitration ruling and for Marcos Jr. to defend the country's territory and sovereign rights in the South China Sea.</p>
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<b>HEADLINE</b>	<b>07/11 PGA Tour facing Justice Dept. probe</b>
<b>SOURCE</b>	<a href="https://abcnews.go.com/Politics/pgs-tour-facing-justice-department-probe-spat-liv/story?id=86618025">https://abcnews.go.com/Politics/pgs-tour-facing-justice-department-probe-spat-liv/story?id=86618025</a>
<b>GIST</b>	<p>The Justice Department has opened a probe against the PGA Tour to see if the tour violated any antitrust laws in relation to their face-off with LIV Golf -- a Saudi-backed golf league -- a PGA Tour spokesperson confirmed to ABC News.</p> <p>The PGA Tour says the probe was not unexpected, and they are confident they'll be vindicated. They didn't say what specifically the Justice Department was looking into.</p> <p>The Wall Street Journal was first to report the probe, and the Justice Department is not commenting on the probe.</p> <p>Financed by the government of Saudi Arabia's Public Investment Fund, the LIV Golf league burst onto the scene last year as a potential rival to the PGA Tour, reportedly offering large sums of money to some of the PGA Tour's top players while promising to shake up the world of golf with a new format and larger prize money for tournament winners.</p> <p>The commissioner of the LIV Golf league is two-time major champion Greg Norman. The retired golfer has been outspoken about the PGA Tour format.</p> <p>The PGA Tour has banned and fined golfers like Dustin Johnson, Phil Mickelson and Bryson DeChambeau who joined the upstart golf league and are some of the biggest and most winningest players in the sport.</p> <p>The probe is just the latest in the back-and-forth between the league backed by the Saudi government and the PGA Tour.</p> <p>"We welcome good, healthy competition," PGA Tour Commissioner Jay Monahan told reporters in late June when asked about the league. "The LIV Saudi Golf League is not that. It's an irrational threat, one not concerned with the return on investment or true growth of the game."</p> <p>In a February letter to Monahan, Norman, who has won two major championships, chided the commissioner saying PGA Tour lawyers must be "holding their breathe."</p> <p>"But when you try to bluff and intimidate players by bullying and threatening them, you are guilty of going too far, being unfair, and you are likely in violation of the law," Norman wrote.</p> <p>LIV Golf has not responded to requests for comment by ABC News.</p> <p>This week, the Open Championship, one of the four major golf championships, gets underway at St. Andrew's in Scotland.</p> <p>In 1994, the Federal Trade Commission looked into "unfair methods of competition," that the PGA Tour was allegedly carrying out, but they were found to have not violated any federal laws.</p>

HEADLINE	07/11 New spike in migrants from Cuba
SOURCE	<a href="https://abcnews.go.com/US/us-sees-spike-migrants-cuba/story?id=86603402">https://abcnews.go.com/US/us-sees-spike-migrants-cuba/story?id=86603402</a>
GIST	<p>The U.S. is experiencing a surge of Cubans migrating into the country in a wave not seen in decades, according to officials.</p> <p>More than 140,000 Cubans have fled the island from October to May, a tenfold increase from the fiscal year 2020, according to the U.S. Customs and Border Protection. The recent wave is greater than the Mariel exodus of 1980, when 125,000 Cubans fled the island.</p> <p>"The scale of the numbers is really historic," Michael Bustamante, the Emilio Bacardí Moreau Chair in Cuban and Cuban-American Studies at the University of Miami and an associate professor of history, told ABC News.</p> <p>And as American border agents have increased their patrols to address the rise in Cubans arriving by boat or through the border, an international relations expert tells ABC News that the situation is likely to get bigger as economic woes plague the island's residents.</p> <p>"People [are] waiting in long lines and a lot of people are fed up," Bustamante said.</p> <p>He said the main factor behind the flight is economics, as Cuba is facing its worse crisis in 30 years. The pandemic and the lack of tourism, which is a source of income for many businesses, have taken their toll, according to Bustamante.</p> <p>"Things are tough. Inflation is high...There are shortages of all kinds," he said.</p> <p>Frank, a 35-year-old Cuban who asked ABC News not to use his full name, said he and his family have been feeling the pinch and are ready to make that move. He told ABC News that he and his wife sold their Havana home to buy tickets to Nicaragua, which lifted visa requirements for Cuban nationals in November, and eventually plan to migrate to the U.S.</p> <p>"[The U.S.] has a structure that allows people to advance in life both economically, politically and socially. They do not have as many obstacles as other countries to get ahead if you put effort to work and get ahead as we should be able to have here," he told ABC News.</p> <p>Aside from entering through the border, U.S. officials say Cubans have also arrived by sea, in boats or rafts outside Florida.</p> <p>The U.S. Coast Guard said it has increased the number of patrols between the U.S. and Cuba to look for suspicious activity and to respond to distress calls. The Coast Guard reported last year that 114 Cuban migrants were interdicted between October 2019 and September 2020 by the agency and other U.S. law enforcement forces.</p> <p>Ten Cuban migrants in a sinking vessel were rescued off the Florida coast in February, according to the Coast Guard.</p> <p>Bustamante said that the U.S. needs to focus on addressing the immigration reform instead of the crackdown at the border.</p> <p>A political spat between the Trump administration and Cuba led to the closure of the U.S. Embassy in Cuba and the stoppage of visa approvals. The Biden administration has allowed Cubans to apply for visas, and has granted 2,000 annually over the past two years, according to federal data.</p> <p>"Asylum and refugee systems are broken. They've been broken for a long time. They're overtaxed," Bustamante said.</p>

	<p>In the meantime, thousands of Cubans like Frank say they are willing to take that risk for a better future.</p> <p>"Deep down they want you to get ahead, but deep down what you have is sadness because you are leaving many people behind," he said.</p>
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## Cyber Awareness

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HEADLINE	07/12 Diplomacy adapt to cyberspace realities?
SOURCE	<a href="https://therecord.media/report-u-s-diplomacy-must-adapt-to-cyberspaces-new-realities/">https://therecord.media/report-u-s-diplomacy-must-adapt-to-cyberspaces-new-realities/</a>
GIST	<p>The U.S. must ditch its long-running efforts to establish norms of good behavior for nation-states in cyberspace and adopt a new foreign policy to confront a fragmented and potentially dangerous digital realm, according to a Council on Foreign Relations report released Tuesday.</p> <p>“The era of the global internet is over,” the study by the think tank’s Independent Task Force on Cybersecurity states. “Washington has worked closely over the last three decades with the private sector and allies to promote a vision of a global, open, secure, and interoperable internet, but the reality of cyberspace is now starkly different.”</p> <p>The wide-ranging report addresses several facets of U.S. cyber policy, such as offensive digital operations, internet freedom, crime and trade. It emphasizes three policy pillars that should underpin the new approach, including consolidation of a “coalition of allies and friends around a vision of the internet that preserves — to the greatest degree possible — a trusted, protected international communication platform.”</p> <p>The examination comes a few months after the State Department <a href="#">opened a Bureau of Cyberspace and Digital Policy</a> to bolster the Biden administration’s work to enhance digital aid to allies and the U.S. role in setting global cyber diplomacy.</p> <p>At the same time, foreign adversaries like China and Russia have stepped up their efforts to control what information their respective populaces can access online — especially since Moscow’s unprovoked invasion of Ukraine — including social media sites.</p> <p>The new report makes more than a dozen recommendations federal leaders and policymakers should take up to tackle the increasingly fractious digital space, including establishing an international cybercrime center so allies can maintain pressure on gangs that target critical infrastructure; being more transparent about U.S. Cyber Command’s “hunt forward” missions, which have been used to defend American elections from foreign interference; and holding states accountable for malicious activity originating from their territories.</p> <p>“A free, global, and open internet was a worthy aspiration that helped guide U.S. policymakers for the internet’s first thirty years. The internet as it exists today, however, demands a reconsideration of U.S. cyber and foreign policies to confront these new realities,” the report concludes.</p> <p>The task force, chaired by CFR Board Members Nathaniel Fick and Jami Miscik, “believes that U.S. goals moving forward will be more limited and thus more attainable, but the United States needs to act quickly to design strategies and tactics that can ameliorate an urgent threat.”</p>
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HEADLINE	07/11 Cyber insurance market has a problem
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.cyberscoop.com/cyber-insurance-gao-critical-infrastructure-ransomware/">https://www.cyberscoop.com/cyber-insurance-gao-critical-infrastructure-ransomware/</a>
GIST	Growing worries about digital assaults on critical infrastructure compounded by the war in Ukraine are reviving questions about the ability of cybersecurity insurance to cover the risks of a catastrophic attack.



“The cyber insurance industry is not just discovering the cyber risk, with respect to critical infrastructure,” said Michael Phillips, chief risk officer at cyber insurance firm Resilience. “I think what is new is there is a more vivid understanding in the market that the time to understand systemic cyber risk and the risk to critical infrastructure is now.”

The challenge has policymakers wondering if and when the government should intervene with its own form of insurance, [a U.S. Government Accountability Office report](#) last month showed.

“The Department of the Treasury’s Federal Insurance Office (FIO) and the Department of Homeland Security’s Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) both have taken steps to understand the financial implications of growing cybersecurity risks,” the report notes. “However, they have not assessed the extent to which risks to critical infrastructure from catastrophic cyber incidents and potential financial exposures warrant a federal insurance response.”

But as decades of cyber insurance industry research show, coming up with those answers isn’t so easy.

### **An unpredictable market**

Cybersecurity insurance has existed in some form since at least the early 2000s. The coverage initially started out as a means to deal with cybersecurity issues such as data breaches and the lawsuits and regulatory penalties that could ensue.

That changed rapidly in 2017 when the [WannaCry](#) and [NotPetya](#) attacks showed how quickly a cyberattack could have resounding consequences around the globe. Then came [another crisis moment](#) for the industry: a rapid rise in ransomware attacks and an increase in ransomware demands, including a high-profile [ransomware attack on U.S. fuel provider Colonial Pipeline](#).

Both turning points surfaced a longstanding problem for the industry.

“The first problem with the cyber industry is that the past doesn’t necessarily predict the future,” said Monica Shokrai, head of business risk and insurance at Google Cloud.

Most types of insurance, such as auto insurance, rely on previous data to predict future risks.

Cybersecurity insurance analysts, on the other hand, are up against a rapidly changing threat landscape, making it difficult to know what kinds of risks companies will face in the year ahead. Take for instance the rapid rise in ransomware attacks over the past few years. A flood of high-cost claims caught the industry by surprise, [leading to skyrocketing premiums](#) and reduced coverage.

When ransomware and other attacks hit critical infrastructure, assessing the risk becomes even more difficult.

“[The public sector and the private sector] don’t have a sufficiently mature view of the systemic risks and cyber risks to critical infrastructure,” said Phillips.

### **The devil is in the data**

Part of the problem, experts say, is getting good data to build actuarial models. Cyber incidents often go unreported and there’s no comprehensive set of data from either industry or the government. A law passed earlier this year [requiring critical infrastructure owners and operators to report incidents](#) to the Department of Homeland Security’s Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency may help, but it won’t go into effect for at least another two years.

There are private sector initiatives also seeking to solve the data gap. CyberAcuView, a 20-member consortium of global cyber insurance companies, [formed last year](#) to pool together data and experience to address industry problems like assessing systemic risk.

### Should the government intervene?

Some federal insurance for cyber assistance already exists. The Terrorism Risk Insurance Program (TRIP), created in 2002 to underwrite acts of terrorism, covers cybersecurity incidents that are “violent or coercive in nature.”

That insurance has been insufficient in part because there’s no clear definition of what kind of cyberattacks apply, experts say.

Instead, insurers are left with “a kind of vague sense the federal government might provide some support for insurance in the event of a really catastrophic cyber attack, but without [the government] defining what the parameters of that are,” said Josephine Wolff, an associate professor of cybersecurity policy at Tufts University.

As government auditors now ask CISA and the FIO to report to Congress as to whether the federal government should create a federal funding mechanism as a backstop for the industry, experts are hoping that policymakers don’t make the same mistakes.

One good initial step insurers say would be for the government to provide a clearer definition of what critical infrastructure means. Without this guidance, it’s difficult for the industry to know how to set limits on policies, experts say.

Even when high-risk scenarios are defined, the minimum standards that insurers should enforce aren’t always clear. More government guidance on cybersecurity standards could also help, experts say.

“A lot of the traditional assessment techniques that insurers would rely on or other companies rely on are not yet present in the operational technology space that several of these critical infrastructure providers will rely on,” said Sharon Chand, a principal with Deloitte’s cyber risk services. As a result, it’s more difficult to assess what to put “in place to protect against some of those high priority cyber threat scenarios.”

The private sector is prepared to step up in other ways, says CyberAcuView’s CEO Mark Camillo. He suggested the market can bring in additional capacity by introducing investor-backed securities, for instance. “We want to get as far as we can take it and then we can look at other types of public-private partnerships to cover some of those gaps.”

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HEADLINE	07/11 Impersonation attacks Amazon Prime Day
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.scmagazine.com/news/email-security/security-researchers-warn-of-impersonation-attacks-ahead-of-amazon-prime-day">https://www.scmagazine.com/news/email-security/security-researchers-warn-of-impersonation-attacks-ahead-of-amazon-prime-day</a>
GIST	<p>With Amazon Prime Day starting at 3 a.m. Eastern Tuesday, Avanan researchers have warned security teams that hackers are taking advantage of Amazon’s popularity to send phishing and <a href="#">credential harvesting emails</a>.</p> <p>Although these attacks mostly target consumers, with many office workers still <a href="#">working from home</a> at least part of the time, it makes sense for security teams to warn their workers of the increased threat.</p> <p>In a <a href="#">blog post</a>, Avanan researchers said these scams will proliferate significantly over the next couple of days. The researchers have pointed out a sharp increase in spoofed Amazon attacks in which hackers are stealing credentials in the hopes that users will think it’s the actual Amazon brand emailing. Attackers dangle the promise of an Amazon gift card if the user takes a survey while in actuality, the link leads to a credential harvesting page.</p> <p>Check Point Research, which has acquired Avanan, has recently found a 37% increase in daily Amazon-related phishing attacks compared to the daily average from June. For last year’s Prime Day, Check Point witnessed an 86% increase in phishing emails related to the sale — and a 16% increase in phishing URLs.</p>

Amazon Prime Day has become a prime target for cybercriminals, as are sales being promoted this week by Walmart, Macy's, Target, and other large retail giants, said Saryu Nayyar, founder and CEO at Gurukul.

"Emails and social media ads can be spoofed by attackers, inviting eager deal seekers to click on rogue links that offer deals too good to be true," Nayyar said "Employees who use their corporate devices to shop on Amazon Prime day should be especially wary of clicking on links in ads and in emails from senders they do not know. In the work-from-home era, employees often use their devices off hours for personal use. This becomes a serious security threat if they are not following cybersecurity best practices and corporate policy."

Ryan McCurdy, vice president of marketing at Bolster, Inc., added that 75% of companies worldwide have experienced some form of phishing attack as it's one of the easiest tactics that hackers use to steal data from employees, customers, and partners. McCurdy said phishing scams are so convincing because they often mimic the look of a brand or a credible person down to a very fine detail. To make matters worse, McCurdy said they prey on human action bias, with a call to action stating that attention must be taken right now.

"As employees adapt to unfamiliar work environments away from the office, their primary focus is not necessarily on security and robust methods of authentication," McCurdy said. "Unfortunately, too many organizations still depend solely on passwords to gain access to devices, applications, and networks. Yet, passwords come with a range of inherent weaknesses — they can be easy to guess, they get reused and, of course, they can be phished. Credential stuffing attacks depend on the ill-advised practice of password reuse."

Chris Olson, CEO at The Media Trust, added that the cyber actors behind phishing attacks are increasingly opportunistic, looking for any trend to exploit in service of their goals. Olson said during the pandemic, phishing attacks related to vaccines and fake health products climbed astronomically — meanwhile, corporate events like Prime Day are a perfect opportunity to ensnare victims with enticing offers.

"Consumers should stay aware that email is not the only way they can be phished," Olson said. "Fake links can spread through malicious advertising and redirects across popular websites and mobile apps. They can also spread through SMS. With phishing attacks reaching an all-time high in Q1 of this year, organizations must enforce digital trust and safety measures across their domains, and consumers should exercise caution wherever they go."

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HEADLINE	<b>07/11 Ransom gangs offer search for stolen data</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/ransomware-gang-now-lets-you-search-their-stolen-data/">https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/ransomware-gang-now-lets-you-search-their-stolen-data/</a>
GIST	<p>Two ransomware gangs and a data extortion group have adopted a new strategy to force victim companies to pay threat actors to not leak stolen data.</p> <p>The new tactic consists in adding a search function on the leak site to make it easier to find victims or even specific details.</p> <p>At least two ransomware operations and a data extortion gang have adopted the strategy recently and more threat actors are likely to do the same.</p> <p><b>Easy finding victim data</b></p> <p>Last week, the ALPHV/BlackCat ransomware operation announced that they created a searchable database with leaks from non-paying victims.</p> <p>The hackers made it clear that the repositories have been indexed and the search works when looking for information by filename or by content available in documents and images.</p>

The results are pulled from the “Collections” part of BlackCat’s leak site and may not have the best accuracy but it is still an evolution of the cybercriminal’s extortion strategy.

BlackCat ransomware operators claim that they do this to make it easier for other cybercriminals to find passwords or confidential information about companies.

The gang already [tried this strategy](#) in mid-June, when they created a searchable site with data allegedly stolen in an attack at a hotel and spa in Oregon.

The site allowed guests at the spa locations and employees to check if their personal information had been stolen during the ransomware attack.

This is a step forward in the extortion business as it puts pressure on the victim to pay the ransom and have the data removed from the web and avoid the potential risk of class action lawsuits.

Towards the end of last week, BleepingComputer noticed that LockBit offered a redesigned version of their data leak site that allowed searching for listed victim companies.

LockBit’s search is not as advanced as the variant touted by BlackCat, and it is limited to only finding victims by name.

However, even in this basic form, the gang’s implementation of the search function still makes it easier to locate on their leak site data from specific companies.

Another leak site that has implemented a search function is the one published by the Karakurt data extortion gang. BleepingComputer’s attempts to use the option showed that it did not work properly, though.

Data extortionists are just starting to explore the search feature. It is unclear if making stolen data searchable is a successful tactic but with multiple extortionist gangs adopting it, the option seems to be an attractive one.

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HEADLINE	<b>07/11 Group ransoms data without ransomware</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.darkreading.com/threat-intelligence/-luna-moth-group-ransoms-data-without-the-ransomware">https://www.darkreading.com/threat-intelligence/-luna-moth-group-ransoms-data-without-the-ransomware</a>
GIST	<p>A little social engineering and commercially available remote administration tools (RATs) and other software are all the new Luna Moth ransom group has needed to infiltrate victims' systems and extort payments.</p> <p>The threat group is essentially pulling off ransom attacks without the ransomware, according to researchers at Sygnia, who today published their findings on Luna Moth.</p> <p>With co-opted branding from Zoho Masterclass and Duolingo, Luna Moth launches a classic phishing campaign to compromise victim devices and exfiltrate any available data. Phishing emails request a payment for a subscription and offer a PDF attachment with a cell phone number to call for more information. When the victim calls to discuss the invoice, the call is answered by the threat actor, who will try to trick the victim into installing Atera, a widely available <a href="#">RAT</a>, giving the attackers full device control.</p> <p>The researchers observed Luna Moth abusing other off-the-shelf remote administration tools including Splashtop, Syncro, and AnyDesk for device takeover. In addition to RATs, commercially available tools like SoftPerfect Network Scanner, SharpShares, and Rclone were used to access and exfiltrate data, the researchers added.</p>

	"The tools are stored on compromised machines under false names masquerading as legitimate binaries," Sygnia said it in its <a href="#">report on Luna Moth</a> . "These tools, in addition to the RATs, provide the threat actors with the means to conduct basic reconnaissance activities, access additional available assets, and exfiltrate data from compromised networks."
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HEADLINE	<b>07/11 New phishing attacks shame, scare victims</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.darkreading.com/remote-workforce/new-wave-phishing-attacks-shame-scare-victims-into-surrendering-twitter-discord-credentials?&amp;web_view=true">https://www.darkreading.com/remote-workforce/new-wave-phishing-attacks-shame-scare-victims-into-surrendering-twitter-discord-credentials?&amp;web_view=true</a>
GIST	<p>A recent wave of social media phishing schemes doubles down on aggressive scare tactics with phony account-abuse accusations to coerce victims into handing over their login details.</p> <p>Last week alone, Malwarebytes Labs uncovered two phishing scams, targeting Twitter and Discord (a voice, video, and text chat app). The <a href="#">Twitter phishing scam</a> sends users a direct message (DM) flagging their account for use of hate speech and requesting the user authenticate the account to avoid a suspension. Users are then redirected to a fake "Twitter help center," which asks for the user's login credentials.</p> <p>The <a href="#">Discord phishing campaign</a> sends users a message from friends or strangers accusing the user of sending explicit photos that are exposed on a server. The message includes a link to the purported server, and if the user wants to follow the link, they are asked to log in via QR code. If they do, the account will most likely be taken over by scammers, according to Malwarebytes. The message then gets sent to the user's friends from his or her account, perpetuating the phishing scam.</p> <p>Patrick Harr, CEO at SlashNext, an anti-phishing company, says the Twitter and Discord attacks are a clever twist on the traditional social engineering scam to steal credentials. The best social engineering scams use fear or outrage to move the victim to act quickly without taking too much time to think "Is this a phishing scam?," he explains.</p> <p>"In both cases, the users of Twitter and Discord are motivated to resolve an issue that could impact their status, business, or entertainment, which is why this phish is so effective," he notes.</p> <p>Social media platforms are perpetual targets of <a href="#">phishing</a> campaigns, using psychological manipulation to encourage victims to disclose confidential login credentials. The pilfered information is then used by malicious actors to hijack the user's social media accounts, or even gain access to their bank accounts.</p> <p>But more importantly for enterprises, successful social media attacks on their employees can open the door to infiltration to the company network via the user's infected device or abused credentials. "This means companies need a BYOD strategy that includes multichannel phishing and malware protection to protect social, gaming, and all messaging apps," Harr says.</p> <p><b>Fear and Urgency as Phishing Tools</b></p> <p>James McQuiggan, security awareness advocate at KnowBe4, explains social media phishes are effective because they use fear and urgency to get the victim to take an action they might not otherwise take. "A lot of the time, phishing attacks rely on the victim reacting to the email in an emotional state," he says. "The victim sees the email and responds without adequately checking the sender or the link."</p> <p>An example is the threat of the social media account being suspended or a notice that the password has expired. When the victim clicks the link and visits the fake website, it looks exactly like the login page, and the user enters their credentials.</p> <p>And if the user employs multifactor authentication (MFA) with the account, he says, the attacker can copy that session key to bypass the login and automatically gain access before the victim realizes it.</p>

Attackers typically create high-pressure situations to increase their success rates. "If the target doesn't have time to think or feels pressured to act, they will likely overlook any red flags or gut reactions telling them not to engage," says Hank Schless, senior manager of security solutions at Lookout.

In the two incidents involving Discord and Twitter, Schless says, the attackers went for the integrity of the individual. "The public shame associated with hate speech or inappropriate behavior can be enough to get someone to act without thinking," he says.

### **Remote Workforce Susceptible to Phishing**

McQuiggan points out remote workers have less in-person interaction with people around them and are less likely to share the experience or event with their co-workers sitting next to them.

"Suppose the organization isn't providing them with equipment from the organization," he says. "In that case, they will certainly be using their own devices and are more relaxed with them at home than with a machine from their organization."

It's not hard for cybercriminals to search LinkedIn or Twitter to see which users work for the public relations, marketing, or communications teams and then work to target them. He says spear-phishing is a top attack vector to get employees to click the links and "open the electronic front door" of the organization.

SlashNext's Harr says training should include social engineering scams to demonstrate how personal interactions, such as social media interactions, can impact their work life. "However, we hear from customers that making policy adjustments restricting employees' use of mobile, social, or other personal apps is not well-received," he says. "In fact, asking employees to install managed security on their personal devices is also a non-starter."

McQuiggan says additional training is certainly one method of getting users aware of the various social media attacks. "Avoid relying on the links in the email and use it as an alert to check the account," he adds. "Use the application or a browser to log in and verify if an account is wrong or experiencing problems, as mentioned in the phishing email."

Organizations should employ mobile phishing protection across their entire user base — to both corporate-owned and personal devices, Schless recommends.

"Phishing credentials on mobile devices is typically how attackers can gain discreet access to the broader infrastructure and execute more advanced attacks like ransomware," he explains. "Protection against those more advanced attacks requires visibility into how users are accessing apps and data, then how they interact with that data."

### **Phishing Attacks Just Won't Die**

Schless is also seeing a recent increase in voice phishing ([vishing](#)) and QR code phishing. "There could also be broader use of deepfake technology to impersonate an individual's voice or face in order to make the malicious communication even more convincing," he says.

Harr says social engineering phishing scams continue to be a serious problem for organizations. "We have seen an increase in requests for SMS and messaging protection as business text compromise, like its cousin business email compromise, is becoming a growing problem for an organization to detect and block."

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HEADLINE	07/11 Brazen crooks pose as cybersecurity firms
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.zdnet.com/article/brazen-crooks-are-now-posing-as-cybersecurity-companies-to-trick-you-into-installing-malware/?web_view=true">https://www.zdnet.com/article/brazen-crooks-are-now-posing-as-cybersecurity-companies-to-trick-you-into-installing-malware/?web_view=true</a>



GIST	<p>Brazen cyber criminals are now posing as cybersecurity companies in phishing messages that claim the recipient has been hit by a cyberattack and that they should urgently respond in order to protect their network.</p> <p>But if the recipient does respond, they risk opening the door to hackers and could see their systems compromised with <a href="#">malware</a>, <a href="#">ransomware</a> and other dangerous cyber threats.</p> <p>The <a href="#">phishing</a> campaign has been <a href="#">detailed by researchers at CrowdStrike</a>, which is one of several cybersecurity companies being impersonated by cyber criminals to trick victims into calling a phoney helpline that then encourages the victim into supplying remote access to their network. CrowdStrike hasn't detailed the other cybersecurity companies that are being impersonated.</p> <p>The message claims to be from "your company's outsourced data security services vendor" and suggests that "abnormal activity" and a "potential compromise" has been discovered on the network as part of a "daily network audit".</p> <p>It goes onto suggest that the cybersecurity provider is already dealing with the company's information security team, but that they've also been told to contact employees about their own machines and that it's "highly necessary" for the person receiving the email to respond to the message.</p> <p>The person receiving the email is provided with an incident case number and is told to call a particular phone number to organise the audit. The example detailed by CrowdStrike also features accurate branding.</p> <p>CrowdStrike describes this as "callback phishing" because when the victim calls the number, they're connected to an operator who'll try to persuade them to install <a href="#">remote administration tools</a> (RATs) to gain access to the network.</p> <p>While the victim might believe a RAT – a tool used for legitimate purposes by many IT teams – is being installed to combat an infection, they're actually just unwittingly allowing a cyber criminal to gain initial access to the network for exploitation down the line.</p> <p>"This is the first identified callback campaign impersonating cybersecurity entities and has higher potential success given the urgent nature of cyber breaches," <a href="#">CrowdStrike said in a blog post</a>.</p> <p>Researchers haven't been able to identify what exactly the criminals behind this particular social-engineering and phishing campaign are doing, but they note that a similar campaign identified in March this year installed remote access software to provide lateral movement around networks and install malware.</p> <p>The likely end goal of the cyber criminals behind these phishing attacks is monetizing the access they've tricked victims into giving, potentially with ransomware attacks. Those attacks could be by the cyber criminals encrypting the network with ransomware themselves, <a href="#">or they could sell access to the infected network to ransomware groups</a>.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>07/10 Fake LinkedIn job offer hacked off \$625M</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.hackread.com/hackers-used-fake-linkedin-job-axie-infinity-hack/?web_view=true">https://www.hackread.com/hackers-used-fake-linkedin-job-axie-infinity-hack/?web_view=true</a>
GIST	<p><b>Earlier in March this year, Ronin Network (RON), a blockchain network underpinning the famous crypto game Axie Infinity and Axie DAO suffered the largest crypto hack against a decentralized finance network reported to date.</b></p> <p>In May 2022, the United States <a href="#">issued an advisory</a> according to which highly skilled hackers from North Korea were trying to get employed by posing as IT freelancers. Now, it has been revealed that Axie Infinity hacking was socially engineered in which North Korean government-backed hacker group Lazarus</p>

used a fake job offer to infiltrate Sky Mavis' network by sending one of the company's employees a [PDF file containing spyware](#).

Lazarus' involvement in such a high-profile hack should not come as a surprise. In January 2022, researchers from different crypto security firms [concluded that](#) North Korean hackers have so far stolen \$1.3 billion from cryptocurrency exchanges across the globe, while their prime suspect in these hacks was the infamous Lazarus gang.

### **Axie Infinity Hack**

The employee, an ex-senior engineer at the company, took the bait and thought that it was a high-paying job offer from another company and opened the PDF. However, in reality, this company didn't exist. During the recruiting process, the ex-employee gave away critical personal information, which attackers used to steal from the company.

Sky Mavis explained that its employees are constantly threatened by "advanced spear-phishing attacks on various social channels." In this instance, one employee was fooled, who [doesn't even work](#) at Sky Mavis anymore.

It is worth noting that the play-to-earn game Axie Infinity is a Pokemon-inspired game developed by Sky Mavis and rakes in approximately \$15 million in revenue daily.

### **How was Ronin Hacked?**

According to [The Block](#), when the hacking took place, Axie Infinity had nine validators from its proof-of-authority, an Ethereum-based sidechain Ronin.

"The attacker managed to leverage that access to penetrate Sky Mavis IT infrastructure and gain access to the validator nodes," Sky Mavis stated.

The attacker had to capture five out of nine validators to infiltrate the company's networks. The spyware-laced PDF helped the attacker control 4 validators and access the community-run Axie DAO (Decentralized Autonomous Organization), from where they got control of the 5th validator.

After compromising the network, the attackers stole \$25 million worth of USDC stablecoin and 173,600 ether (roughly \$597 million) from Axie Infinity's treasury, collectively stealing crypto worth around \$625 million.

Nevertheless, Ronin sidechain increased the number of validators to 11 to enhance security, whereas Sky Mavis is reimbursing Axie Players who lost crypto due to the attack. The company underwent a \$150 million funding round back in April 2022.

### **Lazarus Hackers**

The US government [claims](#) that the notorious North Korean hacker group Lazarus is responsible for the attack. This group specializes in such attacks.

This isn't the first time that Lazarus has targeted the blockchain industry. However, this is uncommon for Lazarus to use social engineering to invade a company's networks. [In fact, in June 2020](#), Slovak internet security company ESET warned LinkedIn users of Lazarus' involvement in a sophisticated LinkedIn recruiter scam targeting military and aerospace firms.

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HEADLINE	<b>07/10 BlackCat ransomware raises the stakes</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://resecurity.com/blog/article/blackcat-aka-alphv-ransomware-is-increasing-stakes-up-to-25m-in-demands?&amp;web_view=true">https://resecurity.com/blog/article/blackcat-aka-alphv-ransomware-is-increasing-stakes-up-to-25m-in-demands?&amp;web_view=true</a>
GIST	Resecurity (USA), a Los Angeles-based cybersecurity company protecting Fortune 500 companies, has detected a significant increase in value of ransom demand requests by the notorious BlackCat ransomware

gang. Such tactics significantly affect ransomware underground ecosystems, hitting businesses of different sizes hard worldwide. Based on the recently compromised victims in Nordics region, which haven't been disclosed by the group yet, the amount to be paid exceeds \$2 million.

BlackCat has been operating since at least November and has launched major attacks such as in January the disruption of OilTanking GmbH, a German fuel company, and in February, the attack on an aviation company, Swissport. Most recently, the ransomware group claimed responsibility for attacks against two universities in the U.S., Florida International University, and the University of North Carolina A&T.

According to experts from Resecurity, BlackCat ransomware actors began defining \$2,5 million ransom demands, with a possible discount close to half, motivating the victim to resolve the incident as soon as possible. The average time allocated for payment varies between 5-7 days, to give victim some time to purchase BTC or XMR cryptocurrency. In case of difficulties, the victim may engage an "intermediary" for further recovery process.

The average ransomware payment climbed 82% since 2020 to a record high of \$570,000 in the first half of 2021, and then by 2022 it almost doubled. The latest forecast is for global ransomware extortion activity to reach \$265 billion by 2031, with total damages for businesses valued at \$10,5 trillion globally. Such metrics would make ransomware the world's largest "shadow economy", generating more damage in expenses than natural disasters. Unfortunately, despite guidance of DOJ not to pay ransom, over 48% of the impacted organizations had to pay cybercriminals due to no alternative options available to recover their operations timely.

BlackCat ransomware is one of the fastest-growing Ransomware-as-a-Service (RaaS) underground groups practicing so called "quadruple extortion" pressing victims to pay:

1. **Encryption:** Victims pay to regain access to scrambled data and compromised computer systems that stop working because key files are encrypted.
2. **Data Theft:** Hackers release sensitive information if a ransom is not paid. As proof, the bad actors share an example of the stolen data or send a listing of stolen files to avoid any legitimacy doubts.
3. **Denial of Service (DoS):** Ransomware gangs launch denial of service attacks that shut down a victim's public websites.
4. **Harassment:** Cybercriminals contact customers, business partners, employees, and media to tell them the organization was hacked.

The BlackCat is also known as "ALPHV", or "AlphaVM" and "AphaV", a ransomware family created in the Rust programming language. In April the FBI published a flash alert about BlackCat ransomware naming the group as one of the top ransomware threats.

ALPHV seems to be significantly competing with LOCKBIT and CONTI – another actively developing ransomware syndicates who called ALPHV "scammers". Likely, the statement was related to some conflict and issues between initial access brokers (IABs), affiliates and team members who could be associated with both projects at different stages.

ALPHV has been associated with two other ransomware groups: DarkSide and BlackMatter. Design overlaps between ALPHV and DarkSide have prompted rumors that ALPHV was a rebrand of DarkSide following the latter's high-profile attack on the Colonial Pipeline.

On underground cybercriminal forums, the representative of the "LockBit" ransomware also initiated threads to state that ALPHV was a rebrand of DarkSide and BlackMatter RaaS programs. While ALPHV denied to be a rebrand of DarkSide or BlackMatter, developers and money launderers from ALPHV are linked to DarkSide/BlackMatter, [according to the FBI](#). Therefore, while ALPHV may not be a rebrand, it is likely that the group recruited many members from these now inactive ransomware gangs.

One of the first public appearances of ALPHV occurred on the RAMP cybercriminal forum on 09 Dec 2021, where a representative of the group promoted the ALPHV RaaS program and attempted to recruit affiliates. In this post, ALPHV operators advertised the new "ALPHV-ng (New Generation)" RaaS partner

	<p>program, which they described as the next generation of ransomware. The ransomware had been written from scratch and have many features, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Four encryption modes: full, fast, DotPattern, and Auto. It uses the two encryption algorithms ChaCha20 and AES.</li> <li>• Infrastructure fragmented with nodes that are interconnected and located behind “NAT + FW”. The infrastructure is set up so that attackers will not reveal the real IP addresses of their servers when receiving cmdshells.</li> <li>• Functional on different platforms including various versions of Linux (ESXI, Debian, Ubuntu, and ReadyNas) and all versions from Windows 7 and above.</li> <li>• Generated “a unique onion domain” for “each new victim”.</li> </ul> <p>Resecurity’s HUNTER unit noticed significant developments on RAMP forum (ransomware underground community) and expects to see more activity from competing groups including Lockbit 3.0.</p> <p>Actors involved in the ransomware business are trying to isolate themselves from semi-public or well-recognized Dark Web forums, they’re doing this to create a community of vetted initial access brokers, developers of ransomware, and actors involved in other related operations.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>07/11 Online payment fraud to top \$343B in 5yrs</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.infosecurity-magazine.com/news/online-payment-fraud-five-years/?&amp;web_view=true">https://www.infosecurity-magazine.com/news/online-payment-fraud-five-years/?&amp;web_view=true</a>
GIST	<p>A new <a href="#">study</a> from Juniper Research suggests that total losses to online payment fraud will exceed \$343bn globally over the next five years, driven largely by fraudster innovation in areas such as account takeover fraud and identity theft. This is despite widespread use of identity verification measures.</p> <p>Online payment fraud includes losses across the sales of digital goods, physical goods, money transfer transactions and banking, as well as purchases like airline ticketing. Fraudster attacks can include phishing, business email compromise and socially engineered fraud.</p> <p>The research also found that to combat rising fraud, fraud prevention vendors must orchestrate the right mix of verification tools, at the most effective point in the customer journey, to best protect users. However, this will require significant capabilities to achieve.</p> <p>“Fundamentally, no two online transactions are the same, so the way transactions are secured cannot follow a one-size-fits-all solution. Payment fraud detection and prevention vendors must build a multitude of verification capabilities and intelligently orchestrate different solutions depending on circumstances, to correctly protect both merchants and users,” said report author Nick Maynard, head of research, Juniper Research.</p> <p>The research identified physical goods purchases as the largest single source of losses, expecting this to account for 49% of cumulative online payment fraud losses globally over the next five years, growing by 110%. Lax address verification processes in developing markets are also a major fraud risk, with fraudsters targeting physical goods specifically due to their resale potential.</p> <p>As such, it recommends merchants adopt strong anti-fraud measures, including multiple sources of address verification and multi-factor authentication, to reduce fraudulent incidents for physical goods merchants.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>07/11 Russia hackers stir trouble beyond Ukraine</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.wired.com/story/russia-hacking-xaknet-killnet/">https://www.wired.com/story/russia-hacking-xaknet-killnet/</a>
GIST	<p><b>THE ATTACKS AGAINST</b> Lithuania started on June 20. For the next 10 days, websites belonging to the government and businesses were bombarded by <a href="#">DDoS attacks</a>, overloading them with traffic and forcing them offline. “Usually the DDoS attacks are concentrated on one or two targets and generate huge traffic,” says Jonas Sakrdinskas, acting director of Lithuania’s national cybersecurity center. But this was different.</p>

Days before the attacks started, Lithuania [blocked coal and metal](#) from being moved through its country to the Russian territory of Kaliningrad, further bolstering its support for [Ukraine](#) in its conflict with [Russia](#). Pro-Russian hacker group Killnet posted “Lithuania are you crazy? 🤔” on its Telegram channel to 88,000 followers. The group then called on hackers—naming a number of other pro-Russian hacking groups—to attack Lithuanian websites. A list of targets was shared.

The attacks, Sakrdinskas explains, were continuous and spread across all areas of daily life in Lithuania. In total more than 130 websites in both the public and private sectors were “hindered” or made inaccessible, according to Lithuania’s government. Sakrdinskas says the attacks, which were linked to Killnet, have mostly dropped off since the start of July, and the government has opened a criminal investigation.

The attacks are just the latest wave of pro-Russian “hacker” activity since the start of [Vladimir Putin’s war in February](#). In recent months Killnet has targeted a growing list of countries that have supported Ukraine but are not directly involved in the war. Attacks against websites in [Germany](#), [Italy](#), [Romania](#), [Norway](#), [Lithuania](#), and the [United States](#) have all been linked to Killnet. The group has declared [“war” on 10 nations](#). The targeting often happens after a country offers support for Ukraine. Meanwhile XakNet, another pro-Russian hacker group, has claimed to have targeted Ukraine’s biggest [private energy company](#) and the Ukrainian government.

While security experts have frequently warned that [attacks from Russia could target Western countries](#), the efforts of volunteer hacker groups can have an impact without being officially backed or conducted by the state. “They definitely have malicious intent when they conduct these attacks,” says Ivan Righi, a senior cyberthreat intelligence analyst at security firm Digital Shadows who [has studied Killnet](#). “They’re not working together with Russia but in support of Russia.”

Killnet started as a DDoS tool and was first spotted in January this year, Righi says. “They were advertising this app or this website, where you could hire a botnet and then use it to launch DDoS attacks.” But when Russia invaded Ukraine at the end of February, the group pivoted. The vast majority of Killnet’s efforts and those of its “legion” group—members of the public who are asked to join and launch attacks—have been DDoS attacks, Righi says, but he has also seen the group linked to some website defacements, and the group itself has made unverified claims that it has stolen data.

Its Telegram channel, where it makes political statements and talks about targets, was created at the end of February and has grown in popularity, with the number of members [doubling since May](#). “They began to gain a lot of popularity from the public in Russia,” Righi says. Righi says it produces slick promotional videos and sells its own merchandise.

While DDoS attacks aren’t sophisticated, they “will still be able to create uncertainty in the population and give the impression that we are a piece in the current political situation in Europe,” said Sofie Nystrom, the head of Norway’s NSM cybersecurity agency, in a [statement](#) after businesses in the country were targeted by DDoS attacks at the end of June.

Russia has long been home to cybercriminals such as ransomware groups, which the country has [largely ignored as long](#) as they don’t target companies in Russia. Simultaneously, Russian military hackers have stirred global chaos for years—[causing electricity blackouts in Ukraine](#), [hacking the Olympics](#), and [conducting the worst cyberattack in history](#). Evidence against [state-backed Russian hackers has been piling up](#) since the start of the war, though Russia has consistently denied launching cyberattacks around the world. The Russian embassy in the United States did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

In April, cybersecurity officials in the US, Australia, Canada, New Zealand, and the UK warned against the potential damage that pro-Russian groups, [including XakNet and Killnet, could cause](#). While it is not clear who is behind Killnet or whether the group is backed by the Russian state, one other notorious Russian hacker group has been linked to the Kremlin. At the end of June, US



cybersecurity company Mandiant, as [first reported by Bloomberg](#), said Russian intelligence operatives had passed stolen information to XakNet. Ukrainian officials have also [pinned attacks on DTEK](#), the country's largest private energy firm, on XakNet. (The group has posted about DTEK multiple times in its 36,000-subscriber Telegram channel.)

"We've seen a number of groups emerge in the context of the Russian invasion of Ukraine," says Alden Wahlstrom, a senior analyst at Mandiant. "XakNet and Killnet both have questionable provenance." Wahlstrom says any claims of hacktivism should be approached with "a healthy dose of skepticism" and that Russian intelligence agencies have an "established history of using cutout groups" for cyberactivities. Last week the Trickbot cybercriminal group—which is made up of multiple smaller groups like the [Conti ransomware group](#), and has [links to the Russian state](#)—was spotted by [IBM](#) targeting Ukraine for the first time. IBM describes the move as a "huge shift" in the group's behavior.

XakNet has claimed it is not being directed by the Russian government. In one Telegram post responding to Mandiant's findings, it said it "fully" supports the Kremlin's position and acknowledges its activities aren't legal. It said it does not cooperate with Russia's FSB security service "at the moment" but is "happy to provide data to those who ask."

It is possible there are some connections among Russian hacker groups themselves. In multiple instances, Wahlstrom says, they have cross-posted about other groups' work on their Telegram channels. For instance, when Killnet called for Lithuania to be targeted it posted a message asking for help from XakNet, Russian ransomware groups, and other pro-Russian hacking groups.

"XakNet and Killnet have given a decent amount of media interviews in the Russian media space, which is a reason to at least consider that there is a potential dual component to some of this activity," Wahlstrom says. "They are helping to advance Russian interests abroad, either in Ukraine or further afield, but on the flip side they're being heavily promoted in the Russian media as groups that are displays of these patriotic volunteers that embody support for Russian government decisions."

Killnet responded to a request for comment by saying it was "no longer friends" with XakNet. "Our enemy is your government bro," the group says. "But we are not dangerous to ordinary people."

DDoS attacks have been prominent in Ukraine, too. [Officials there created a volunteer IT army](#), where people from around the world can help launch attacks against Russian targets. The IT army has claimed to take down, at least temporarily, the websites of Russian government departments, food delivery services, and banks—one of Putin's speeches last month was [delayed by an hour](#) after the IT army attacks. Attacks against Russia have also come from hacktivist groups outside of Ukraine, [such as Anonymous](#).

Ultimately, as Russia's war against Ukraine continues, the activity of pro-Russian cyber groups continues to be in line with Russian aims. "Moscow has kept its relationship with Russia-based hacktivist groups deliberately ambiguous," says Emily Harding, deputy director of the international security program at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, a US-based think tank. "Moscow's security services know who these operators are and will use some form of leverage to force them to cooperate when needed."

Harding says analysts have continuously predicted that Russia would use "deniable tools" and groups to react against countries that support Ukraine. While DDoS attacks may not be sophisticated, they contribute to this effort. And if attacks by so-called hacktivist groups become more advanced, there's a greater chance they could cause more damage or risk escalation of the conflict. "The risk of miscalculation is real," Harding says. "No one has yet really tested the limits of cyber operations without causing escalation."

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SOURCE	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/jul/12/europol-phone-scam-defrauding-germans">https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/jul/12/europol-phone-scam-defrauding-germans</a>
GIST	<p>One recent summer afternoon, Christof Bock, a 38-year-old Berlin-based data engineer, picked up an incoming call from an unfamiliar number. Over a crackly line, he was informed in English that his ID and bank details had been found in a police raid in suburban Berlin, alongside 20lb (9kg) of cocaine and paperwork showing transfers from his account to Colombia. To protect his savings, he was urged to transfer money from his bank account, and fast.</p> <p>The call to Bock’s mobile was one from a deluge of scam calls that have inundated German citizens in recent months, through which scammers who impersonate Europol and <a href="#">Interpol</a> officers, and spoof the international law enforcement agencies’ phone numbers, have collected private data and defrauded people of millions of euros.</p> <p>On Thursday Germany’s telecommunications regulator, the Federal Network Agency, said it had received a record number of complaints about the “Europol ploy” in June – about 7,600 out of a total of 22,000 since the end of February. The number of unreported calls is likely to be several times higher.</p> <p>Criminal police offices in most of Germany’s 16 states would not disclose the sums the fraudsters have managed to trick citizens out of, but police in Bavaria, home to about 15% of the country’s overall population, said the sum of damages by 21 June in that state alone amounted to more than €2.5m.</p> <p>The mass-scale scheme, which investigators believe is being carried out from call centres in India or Pakistan, is stretching the capacity of local German law enforcement. The ploy exploits design flaws in telecommunication infrastructure that phone providers are struggling to fix, and unlike previous phone-scramming schemes, it doesn’t appear to select its targets based on age or location. The first voice Bock heard over the phone was an automated message telling him he had been the victim of identity theft.</p> <p>“What we are dealing with here is criminals who go for quantity rather than quality,” said Colin B Nierenz, an assistant chief constable at North-Rhine Westphalia’s criminal police department. “They are blindly trying out numbers en masse. Anyone who has a mobile phone is a potential target.”</p> <p>Bock pressed one and was put through to a real operator who informed him of the details of the apparent identity theft and immediately told him he would receive another call from a Europol investigator. The next call came from a Dutch number that a quick Google search seemed to confirm belonged to Europol.</p> <p>Caller ID spoofing, by which mobile phone displays are made to show not the number of the actual caller but one that is digitally created, has been available to people with advanced technological knowledge for years, though the practice has become more widespread with the growing prevalence of internet-based VoIP (voiceover internet protocol) telephone calls.</p> <p>Speaking in English with what Bock described as a non-European accent, the pretend Europol officer advised him to protect his savings by buying several Google Play gift cards from a nearby shop and passing on the serial number.</p> <p>Investigators say in other cases scammers tried to persuade victims to buy Amazon vouchers, buy cryptocurrency or install software on their computer that enables them to access victims’ bank accounts.</p> <p>Jan Op Gen Oorth, a Europol spokesperson, said: “Europol will never call you directly or ask people for money. “We are literally not in a legal position to do so.”</p> <p>When Bock expressed scepticism, the caller on the other end of the line said a call to the local police would result in him being detained “for 72 hours” without access to a lawyer and that all his supposedly frozen assets would be donated to charity.</p> <p>“That’s when I hung up,” Bock said. “At the beginning the whole thing sounded vaguely believable, but it got more and more abstruse.”</p>

Germany appears to be the main target of the Europol scammers, though there have also been a few reported cases in France and Austria. Federal and state police have put out messages to warn citizens of the scheme and advise them to put the phone down. But investigations into the criminals have struggled to make progress, in part because it has been left to separate police forces in the 16 federal states to look into the matter individually, many of whom are time-poor and overstretched.

With previous waves of scam calls, investigators were eventually able to identify the criminal networks behind them: earlier this year, German police arrested several members of a Polish gang of scammers who had specialised in defrauding elderly people by posing as their grandchildren over the phone.

But tracking down the schemers behind the more technologically sophisticated Europol ploy poses more of a challenge. The Federal Network Agency has found that the calls, which have arrived in Germany via networks in India, Romania, Spain and other countries, are likely being routed across several borders to cover the fraudsters' tracks.

In the few cases where police were able to track down the money that the criminals had persuaded their victims to transfer, it had ended up in bank accounts in Thailand.

In the absence of a breakthrough, authorities are banking on phone companies tightening their infrastructure in a way that would make it easier for customers to detect spoofed calls.

Germany's Telecommunications Modernisation Act, which came into effect last December but allows a one-year implementation period, obliges phone providers operating in Germany to anonymise calls from a foreign network that try to disguise themselves as German numbers. A "No caller ID" message flashing up on a mobile phone screen would have a "warning effect", the telecommunications regulator said.

Deutsche Telekom, the largest phone provider working in Europe, said it was working to implement changes that went beyond the new act's requirements.

Some experts question whether gaps in the current setup can be closed in such a way that fraudsters won't be able to exploit them in the future. "No phone provider can ever guarantee that the caller ID showing up on your phone is the correct one," said Frank Rieger, a spokesperson for the Chaos Computer Club hacking collective. "The infrastructure just isn't set up for that."

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HEADLINE	<b>07/11 Restaurants face extortion threat on ratings</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2022/07/11/dining/google-one-star-review-scam-restaurants.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2022/07/11/dining/google-one-star-review-scam-restaurants.html</a>
GIST	<p>In a new scam targeting restaurants, criminals are leaving negative ratings on restaurants' Google pages as a bargaining chip to extort digital gift cards.</p> <p>Restaurateurs from San Francisco to New York, many from establishments with Michelin stars, said in recent days that they've received a blitz of one-star ratings on Google, with no description or photos, from people they said have never eaten at their restaurants. Soon after the reviews, many owners said, they received emails from a person claiming responsibility and requesting a \$75 Google Play gift card to remove the ratings. If payment is not received, the message says, more bad ratings will follow.</p> <p>The text threat was the same in each email: "We sincerely apologize for our actions, and would not want to harm your business but we have no other choice." The email went on to say that the sender lives in India and that the resale value of the gift card could provide several weeks of income for the sender's family. The emails, from several Gmail accounts, requested payment to a Proton mail account.</p> <p>Kim Alter, the chef and owner at <a href="#">Nightbird</a> in San Francisco, said Google removed her one-star ratings after she tweeted the company to complain. Chinh Pham, an owner of <a href="#">Sochi Saigonese Kitchen</a> in Chicago, said her one-star reviews were taken down after customers raised an outcry on social media.</p>

“We don’t have a lot of money to fund this kind of crazy thing from happening to us,” Ms. Pham said.

At Google, teams of operators and analysts, as well as automated systems, monitor the reviews for such abuses. A Google Maps spokeswoman said Monday that the platform was investigating the situation and had begun removing reviews that violated its policies.

“Our policies clearly state reviews must be based on real experiences, and when we find policy violations, we take swift action ranging from content removal to account suspension and even litigation,” she said.

But some restaurateurs said it’s been a challenge to reach someone at Google to help them. As of Monday, some restaurants were still receiving the negative reviews. Some said that they’ve continued to flag them, but that Google had not yet acted.

“You’re just kind of defenseless,” said Julianna Yang, the general manager of [Sons & Daughters](#) in San Francisco, who has taken on much of her restaurant’s response to the messages. “It seems like we’re just sitting ducks, and it’s out of luck that these reviews might stop.”

For [EL Ideas](#) in Chicago, Google ruled Monday that one of the recent one-star ratings the restaurant reported as fake did not violate the platform’s policies and would not be removed, said William Talbott, a manager at the restaurant.

“This is another nightmare for us to handle,” he said. “I’m losing my mind. I don’t know how to get us out of this.”

Law enforcement officials have urged restaurant owners to contact Google if they’ve been targeted, and to report these crimes to their local police departments, as well as the [F.B.I.](#) and the [Federal Trade Commission](#). The commission advises businesses not to pay the scammers.

This type of extortion is considered a cybercrime, said Alan B. Watkins, a cybersecurity consultant and the author of “Creating a Small Business Cybersecurity Program.” He said it can’t be prevented, and that the only thing businesses can do is minimize damage by reporting it to the authorities and informing customers about the bogus reviews. The use of Google Play gift cards is likely an intentional choice, he added, because such transactions are difficult to trace.

An onslaught of bad reviews can be disastrous for businesses [still recovering financially](#) from the coronavirus pandemic. A lower average rating on Google, restaurateurs said, could make the difference for a customer deciding where to dine.

“These are part of the decision-making process, where people decide where to go for the first time,” said Jason Littrell, the marketing director at [Overthrow Hospitality](#) in New York City, which has several plant-based restaurants, including Avant Garden in the East Village. “People are willing to go further and pay more for the higher star rating.”

Mr. Littrell said that the scammers are “weaponizing the ratings,” and that he feels that restaurant staff can’t do much to stop it. The phony reviews have proved that “our reputation doesn’t really belong to us anymore, which is really scary.”

At [Roux](#) in Chicago, the staff has been responding to each review it believes is fake with a note that includes the text from the email threat. This has prompted the scammers to send a more strongly worded follow-up email: “We can keep doing this indefinitely. Is \$75 worth more to you than a loss to the business?”

“These are business terrorists,” said Steve Soble, an owner of Roux, “and I hope it ends before it starts to damage our business.”

## Terror Conditions

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HEADLINE	<b>07/12 Paris: no appeal from Bataclan suspect</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/no-appeal-bataclan-suspect-closing-chapter-2015-paris-attacks-2022-07-12/">https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/no-appeal-bataclan-suspect-closing-chapter-2015-paris-attacks-2022-07-12/</a>
GIST	<p>PARIS, July 12 (Reuters) - Salah Abdeslam, the lone survivor of an Islamist militant squad that killed 130 people in attacks in Paris in 2015, has not appealed his life sentence or guilty verdict - closing the door to a second trial, a Paris appeals court said Tuesday.</p> <p>A French court last month judged Abdeslam guilty on terrorism and murder charges. Nineteen others were found guilty for helping organise the Nov. 13, 2015 attacks that targeted the Bataclan music hall, bars and restaurants and the Stade de France sports stadium.</p> <p>The Paris appeals court said in a statement that none of the 20 suspects had appealed the decision.</p> <p>The men were sentenced last month following a 10-month trial, with Abdeslam handed the most severe criminal sentence possible in the country with no possibility of early release.</p> <p>Defiant at the start of the trial, Abdeslam had said that he was a "soldier" of Islamic State, which has claimed responsibility for the attacks, but later apologised to the victims.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>07/12 DHS could do more to fight domestic terror</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.hstoday.us/featured/oig-says-dhs-could-do-more-to-fight-domestic-terrorism/">https://www.hstoday.us/featured/oig-says-dhs-could-do-more-to-fight-domestic-terrorism/</a>
GIST	<p>The Office of Inspector General (OIG) says the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) could do more to address the threats of domestic terrorism.</p> <p>OIG's comments come as Director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), Christopher Wray, says travel and technology has blurred the lines between foreign and domestic threats, and that the rise of lone actors means there is little intelligence on planned attacks. More and more attacks, he said at a joint meeting with MI5 in London last week, are being carried out with little planning or training.</p> <p>Back in September, Wray said domestic terrorism cases being investigated by the FBI had more than doubled to around 2,700 investigations.</p> <p>"We're countering lone domestic violent extremists radicalized by personalized grievances ranging from racial and ethnic bias to anti-government, anti-authority sentiment, to conspiracy theories," said the FBI director.</p> <p>DHS and the FBI collaborate to prevent terrorist attacks in the United States. DHS is responsible for delivering intelligence and information to federal, state, local, and tribal governments, and the private sector. FBI is responsible for leading law enforcement and domestic intelligence efforts to defeat terrorist attacks. They both also work together and with state and local law enforcement partners in matters related to domestic terrorism, including information sharing and training.</p> <p>Last month, DHS warned that online domestic extremists are calling for a "copycat" Uvalde, Texas, school attack, which has also become a focus of disinformation and conspiracy theories. In its <a href="#">National Terrorism Advisory System Bulletin</a>, DHS said "individuals in online forums that routinely promulgate domestic violent extremism and conspiracy-laden content have praised the May 2022 shooting at an elementary school in Uvalde, Texas and encouraged copycat attacks".</p>

The bulletin, which was issued on June 7 and expires November 30, is in response to several recent violent attacks by lone offenders against minority communities, schools, houses of worship, and mass transit. It also uses the example of the grocery store attack in Buffalo, New York in May 2022, in which the suspect claimed he was motivated by racist, anti-Black, and anti-Semitic conspiracy theories. Also in May, an attack in Laguna Woods, California targeted congregants of a church that serves the Taiwanese community.

OIG's report is timely although given the prevalence of such attacks already this year, and rising chatter from individuals and groups online, the findings are concerning. Following its audit, the DHS watchdog found that the Department has taken steps to help the United States counter terrorism, but those efforts have not always been consistent in relation to domestic terrorism.

The DHS Lexicon defines domestic terrorism as “any act of unlawful violence that is dangerous to human life or potentially destructive of critical infrastructure or key resources committed by a group or person based and operating entirely in the United States or its territories, without direction or inspiration from a foreign terrorist group. This act is a violation of the criminal laws of the United States, or of any State or other subdivision of the United States, and appears to be intended to intimidate or coerce a civilian population, to influence the policy of the government by intimidation or coercion, or to affect the conduct of government by mass destruction, assassination, or kidnapping.”

A DHS Office of Intelligence and Analysis (I&A) memorandum issued in March 2021 noted the terms “domestic terrorism” and “domestic violent extremism” are interchangeable.

In 2019, DHS established a strategic framework with goals for countering terrorism and an accompanying implementation plan with actions designed to achieve those goals. However, DHS' data showed more than 70 percent of the milestone actions in the implementation plan were not completed as planned. OIG said these failings occurred because DHS has not established a governance body with staff dedicated to longterm oversight and coordination of its efforts to combat domestic terrorism.

Data from the [Center for Strategic and International Studies](#) (CSIS) shows that white supremacists and other like-minded attackers used more lethal weapons, such as firearms. Anarchists, anti-fascists, and other like-minded attackers primarily used less lethal methods, including melee attacks.

CSIS adds that of the 38 white supremacist and other like-minded terrorist attacks and plots in 2021, 16 used firearms, 9 involved explosives and incendiaries, 4 were melee attacks using weapons such as knives or bludgeoning weapons, and 2 were vehicular attacks.

Of the 31 anarchist, antifascist, and like-minded terrorist attacks and plots in 2021, 19 were melee attacks using weapons such as knives or bludgeoning objects, 3 primarily used explosives or incendiaries, 2 used firearms, and 1 was a vehicular attack.

Rising domestic terrorism concerns, intelligence, and eventual attacks – such as the March 2021 shooting spree at three spas in the Atlanta metropolitan area, prompted the White House to create the National Strategy for Countering Domestic Terrorism, which it issued in June 2021. The strategy outlines four “strategic pillars” to guide the U.S. government response to the threat posed by domestic terrorism: understand and share domestic terrorism-related information, prevent domestic terrorism recruitment and mobilization to violence, disrupt and deter domestic terrorism activity, and confront long-term contributors to domestic terrorism.

As this strategy turns one year old, OIG has noted some improvements but says DHS must improve how it identifies domestic terrorism threats, tracks trends for future risk-based planning, and informs partners and the public about domestic terrorism.

I&A has developed a tracker of domestic terrorism attacks and disrupted plots since January 2010, but OIG found it has not used the information to develop overall statistics on domestic terrorism that DHS and I&A partners could use to make informed decisions. In January 2022, I&A completed its latest quarterly



update to the domestic terrorism incident tracker by adding additional requirements, such as weapons and tactics used and the ideology motivating the attack or plot, which improved the process. According to an I&A official, the first time I&A used the spreadsheet tracker to develop DHS statistics on domestic terrorism incidents and briefed Federal, state, and local government partners was March 2022.

OIG found that the Department has limited access to the sources of information it needs to identify domestic terrorism threats.

I&A officials told OIG they cannot access some types of information that is not publicly available, such as private social media groups and encrypted messaging applications and that an executive order (12333) from 1981 and revised in 2008, limits their ability to collect this information. OIG's review of nine I&A finished intelligence domestic terrorism products from July 1, 2020 through August 3, 2021, showed six of the products contained information that its partners could easily find on their own. The executive order limits I&A to collecting information overtly or through publicly available sources. In addition, the Privacy Act of 1974 limits DHS's ability to independently collect, maintain, use, or disseminate records protected by the First Amendment. One I&A official told OIG that I&A could use better insight into information that is not publicly available, such as FBI case files, state and local information on arrests and charging information, and social media platforms.

OIG also determined that DHS may not always issue its advisories to the public in a timely manner to help stakeholders take steps to protect themselves from threats and help detect or prevent an attack. For example, the bulletin issued on January 27, 2021, warned of a heightened threat environment across the United States following the presidential inauguration. DHS issued this bulletin weeks after the January 6, 2021 attack on the Capitol.

Given the current concern about domestic terrorism and the country's ongoing vulnerability to violent acts and destruction of critical infrastructure, OIG has made six recommendations to DHS:

- Perform a needs assessment to identify the staffing and budget necessary for overseeing the department-wide mission to counter domestic terrorism.
- Use the results of the needs assessment to establish a long-term governing body to oversee and coordinate the Department's efforts to counter domestic terrorism by creating: a charter with business rules and roles and responsibilities for longterm action; a formalized documented process to monitor and track completion of action items; and a formalized documented feedback process to review, update, and measure the impact of priority actions taken in response to changes in the domestic terrorism threat environment.
- Work with the Attorney General and the appropriate congressional committees, to ensure each Department collects and shares direct access to domestic terrorism information.
- Partner with agencies or DHS components to obtain access to appropriate information that may inform development of nationallevel statistics on terrorism and targeted violence.
- Use the information collected in the domestic terrorism incident tracker to create national-level statistics on domestic terrorism; and share statistics with other DHS components.
- Use the results of the needs assessment to ensure a dedicated level of staff support and resources to execute National Terrorism Advisory System functions.

DHS concurred with each recommendation and aims to complete work to address these by June 30, 2023, with some actions being completed by the end of 2022.

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[Read the full report at OIG](#)

HEADLINE	07/11 ISIS planned chemical attacks in Europe
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.washingtonpost.com/national-security/2022/07/11/isis-chemical-biological-weapons/">https://www.washingtonpost.com/national-security/2022/07/11/isis-chemical-biological-weapons/</a>
GIST	In the summer of 2014, as his followers were ravaging the cities of northern Iraq, Islamic State leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi convened a secret meeting with a weapons expert whose unusual skills the terrorist chief was anxious to acquire.



His guest was a small man, barely above 5 feet tall, and he had only recently been freed from a years-long stint in U.S. and Iraqi prisons. But before that, Salih al-Sabawi had been an Iraqi official of some renown: a Russian-trained engineer who had once helped President Saddam Hussein build his extensive arsenal of chemical weapons.

Baghdadi had summoned Sabawi, 52, to offer him a job. If supplied with the right equipment and resources, could he produce the same weapons for the Islamic State? Sabawi's reply, according to a later intelligence report about the meeting, was yes. He could do that and more.

Thus began what U.S. and Iraqi Kurdish officials describe as a crash effort aimed at building the biggest arsenal of chemical and, potentially, biological weapons ever assembled by a terrorist group. Within six months, under Sabawi's direction, the Islamic State would manufacture mustard gas, a chemical weapon from the World War I era, as well as bombs and rockets filled with chlorine.

But Sabawi's ambitions, and by extension Baghdadi's, were much broader, according to newly disclosed details on the Islamic State weapons program. Iraqi Kurdish intelligence reports, seen by The Washington Post, shed new light on the role played by Sabawi, a mysterious figure known within the terrorist group as Abu Malik, and the ambitious plan by Islamic State leaders to develop and use weapons of mass destruction in Iraq and abroad.

New insights also are emerging from a U.N. investigation that is combing through millions of pages of Islamic State records as it seeks evidence of the group's war crimes. In addition, several current and former U.S. officials in interviews with The Post spoke for the first time in detail about an urgently planned military operation, conducted in 2015 by U.S. Special Operations forces with assistance from Kurdish Peshmerga operatives, to kill Sabawi and crush the weapons program before it reached maturity.

U.S. officials learned through electronic surveillance in 2014 that Sabawi was working to produce powerful new weapons using highly lethal botulinum toxin and ricin, while also pursuing plans to make weaponized anthrax. Botulinum toxin, a neurotoxin derived from same bacteria that causes botulism, was explored as potential weapon by both the United States and the Soviet Union during the Cold War. Ricin, a toxin extracted from castor beans, was weaponized by the Soviets and used in political assassinations.

Sabawi's intention, current and former U.S. officials said, was to create a large stockpile consisting of multiple types of chemical and biological agents to be used in military campaigns as well as in terrorist attacks against the major cities of Europe.

"They were specifically looking at Western Europe," a senior U.S. official knowledgeable about Islamic State operations said. Like several other U.S. and Iraqi officials, he spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss details obtained from sensitive surveillance operations. "We know they were also interested in U.S. military bases, on the continent, or really anywhere," the official said. "They were ultimately going to go with the easiest target."

That the Islamic State had manufactured small quantities of chemical weapons has been [previously reported](#). The terrorist group used chlorine and mustard gas against Kurdish and Iraqi forces nearly two dozen times, from early 2015 until the liberation of the Iraqi city of Mosul two years later.

Other terrorist groups, including al-Qaeda, have explored the feasibility of making chemical and biological weapons. But by recruiting Sabawi, the Islamic State had acquired the services of a rare expert with years of practical experience in making chemical weapons in industrial-sized quantities.

The U.S. government's only public reference to Sabawi came in a brief 2015 Pentagon statement announcing the recent death of a "chemical weapons engineer" named Abu Malik in an airstrike. Few knew at the time about the extent of Sabawi's experience or his vision for providing Islamic State leaders with frightening weapons to augment the group's terror campaign in Europe.

“If Abu Malik had survived, his experience working for Saddam’s program would have made the threat of the Islamic State’s chemical weapons much higher,” said Gregory Koblentz, an expert on chemical and biological weapons and director of the Biodefense Graduate Program at the Schar School of Policy and Government at George Mason University. “It is pretty horrifying to think of what could have happened if the Islamic State had used a chemical weapon, instead of guns and bombs, to conduct one of their attacks in a major European city.”

### **Toxic factories in Iraq**

During the 1980s, at the height of Saddam’s reign as the strongman leader of Iraq, the manufacturing center for Iraqi chemical weapons was a massive industrial complex called the Muthanna State Establishment, some 85 miles northwest of Baghdad. Iraqi scientists oversaw the production of at least four kinds of chemical weapons, which the army put to immediate use in the brutal trench warfare of the Iran-Iraq War. Iraqi chemical bombs and shells were used to kill or wound more than 50,000 Iranians, from front-line soldiers to civilians living in villages and towns along the border.

Among the scores of scientists employed at Muthanna was Sabawi, who, according to his intelligence file, took a job in the facility in 1989, at age 28. An Army chemical engineer who had trained in Iraq and in the Soviet Union, he worked at the weapons plant until operations halted with the defeat of the Iraqi army in the first Gulf War in 1991.

At the end of the war, Muthanna was at its peak, its three main factories capable of churning out 500 tons of sulfur mustard, commonly called mustard gas, each year, along with smaller quantities of deadlier nerve agents, such as tabun, sarin and VX. Sabawi was specifically involved in mustard-gas production during the plant’s final three years, according to a dossier maintained by the Iraqi Kurdish Regional Government’s Counter Terrorism Department.

After the war, Sabawi found that his skills as a weaponeer were no longer needed. The chemical weapons factories at Muthanna were systematically dismantled in the 1990s under U.N. supervision, and hundreds of tons of the weapons he helped make were destroyed in incinerators or chemically neutralized.

Sabawi kept his army job and was eventually promoted to brigadier general, but his resentment over the destruction of the Iraqi chemical weapons program appears to have lingered. According to the dossier, he joined an insurgent group after the U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003, allying himself with Islamist extremists who called themselves al-Qaeda in Iraq. He was captured in 2005 and spent the next seven years behind bars, first in a U.S. military detention center and then a civilian-run Iraqi prison.

As a former high-ranking military officer, Sabawi maintained important political ties, and intelligence officials said he eventually was able to use those connections to regain his freedom. He walked out of prison in 2012, precisely the moment when his old insurgent group was beginning to regain strength under a new name, the Islamic State of Iraq. Later it would become known simply as the Islamic State, or ISIS.

Iraqi Kurdish officials said Sabawi may have known Baghdadi from his years as an insurgent. In any case, the self-proclaimed caliph of the Islamic State became intensely interested in the former weaponeer after his fighters completed their stunning conquest of Mosul in 2014.

That was Baghdadi’s moment of triumph, and he was looking to capitalize on it. Having seized huge swaths of Iraq and Syria, he now controlled resources that no terrorist leader had ever possessed: military bases, factories, universities, television stations, internet servers and banks filled with millions of dollars in hard currency.

With tens of thousands of fighters at his command, and more arriving each day, Baghdadi proclaimed to his followers that the Islamic State would eventually conquer all the Middle East, while using the threat of mass-casualty terrorist attacks to keep Western countries from intervening. To accomplish his vision, U.S. officials said, Baghdadi needed special weapons. And Sabawi knew how to make them.

### **‘Emir’ of chemical weaponry**

Sabawi's Kurdish dossier is a thick sheaf of documents and reports that span 10 years, including the brief but intensely busy period when he held the title of emir of Manufacturing of Chemical and Biological Weaponry for the Islamic State. A mug shot accompanying the file depicts a middle-aged man with close-cropped hair, a gray-flecked beard and brown eyes.

Some of the Iraqi experts who went to work for the Islamic State would later claim that they were forced to take jobs or accepted positions because they had no other way to make a living. By contrast, a summary document profiling Sabawi's role in the terrorist group suggests he was an enthusiastic participant who was personally loyal to Baghdadi, and well-rewarded for his service.

"He was a high-ranking official in ISIS, close to Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi and responsible for advancing chemical and biological weaponry," the document states.

Shortly after his meeting with Baghdadi, the records show, Sabawi was given his own laboratory, in a technical school on the grounds of Mosul University, and allowed to recruit and hire a professional staff that included foreign-trained engineers. For production of the weapons themselves, the Islamic State commandeered a factory in Wadi Ikab, a bleak industrial neighborhood in the far western outskirts of Mosul.

In the summer of 2014, to help Sabawi acquire the needed materials, the caliphate organized an extensive canvass of the region's hundreds of laboratories and warehouses for equipment and supplies that could be used to make weapons of all kinds, from conventional explosives to toxic compounds, said Jeff Brodeur, a retired U.S. Army chemical and biological weapons expert who investigated Islamic State activities after the group was driven from Mosul. Terrorist operatives went into schools, factories and medical clinics and stripped them of every item deemed useful.

"They just went in and harvested whatever they needed," Brodeur said.

As U.N. investigators would later confirm, the Islamic State offered up the use of Iraqi prisoners as possible human test subjects for the new weapons Sabawi would make. Records and interviews suggest the group did use inmates in human trials on several occasions, according to a [report last year](#) by the U.N. Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Daesh. Daesh is one of several common names for the Islamic State.

Because of Sabawi's background in making mustard gas, his first attempts at weapons production started with that relatively simple compound. A blister agent, it penetrates clothing and causes excruciating burns to the skin and eyes or, if inhaled, potentially fatal damage to lung tissues. Yet, despite his expertise, Sabawi appears to have struggled at first to replicate the formula used for making mustard gas at Muthanna.

Experts familiar with Sabawi's program say he switched to a simpler formula that yields a less potent product. Investigators from the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, a chemical-weapons watchdog group based in The Hague that would later collect samples, concluded that his brand of mustard gas was relatively crude, and tended to degrade quickly. Still, it was good enough to be used in battle.

Investigators have documented 20 chemical attacks by the Islamic State between January 2015 and April 2017. All involved mustard gas or chlorine, a common industrial compound widely available in Iraq and Syria, loaded into mortar shells or rockets or placed in barrels and detonated in suicide attacks.

The worst episode, near Taza Khurmatu, a Kurdish town south of Kirkuk, wounded between 600 and 1,000 people in March 2016. At least three victims later died, said retired Brig. Gen. Hajar Ismail, an adviser to the Iraqi Kurdish Regional Government who participated in the investigations, in an email.

In addition to the physical harm, Ismail said, the attacks struck fear across a band of Kurdish towns and villages that, years earlier, had been targets of Hussein's chemical weapons. Bombs and rockets filled with

lethal gases killed at least 3,200 people around the city of Halabja in March 1988, the deadliest chemical attack ever conducted against civilians. “Few people in the world,” Ismail said, “have experienced more chemical attacks than the Kurds.”

### **A secret intercept**

The Islamic State’s interest in mustard gas as a battlefield weapons triggered alarms in Washington. But those concerns deepened with the discovery of plans by the group’s leaders to make additional weapons and export them for use in terrorist attacks.

Over the fall and winter of 2014, Sabawi came under continuous surveillance by U.S. intelligence agencies and Special Operations units, with assistance from Iraqi Kurdish operatives, according to two U.S. officials with knowledge of the operation. From intercepted communications came the discovery of Sabawi’s efforts to obtain ingredients for botulinum toxin and ricin.

Islamic State records obtained by the U.N. investigators also describe the group’s pursuit of botulinum toxin and ricin weapons, and reveal an “interest in developing anthrax,” according to [an interim report](#) prepared for U.N. Security Council members in May.

U.S. analysts and experts note that Sabawi appears to have had no specific training in anthrax or biological toxins such as ricin, so he likely would have needed many months of trial and error to produce usable weapons. But in 2014, with the Islamic State in firm control of Mosul and all its resources, he may have believed he had plenty of time.

The fruits of his research were to be delegated to [a special unit](#) created by Baghdadi to carry out terrorist attacks overseas, U.S. officials said. That unit, led mainly by French and Belgian volunteers, would gain infamy in 2015 after spectacular attacks on cities in Western Europe. The deadliest was the coordinated [terrorist assault](#) on cafes and entertainment venues in Paris in November of that year. Using small arms and suicide bombs, the assault killed more than 130 people and wounded around 400.

### **His final commute**

At the time of the intercepts, an American-led coalition was beginning its fight to retake territory seized by the Islamic State, including Mosul, which was fully liberated in 2017. But the chemical threat could not wait. Pentagon officials decided to strike quickly, in an effort to eliminate Sabawi’s operation before he had a chance to build bigger and better weapons. U.S. officials were able to monitor his daily commute from his laboratory at Mosul University to his home in a residential district called al-Mithaq, about six miles away.

One afternoon in late January 2015, Sabawi was driving home from work, accompanied by one of his sons, apparently unaware that his vehicle was being tracked. A U.S. aircraft, most likely a drone, fired a missile that struck the car and killed both passengers.

Other strikes followed, targeting Sabawi’s small network of labs and production centers. The two U.S. officials with knowledge about the operation said his Mosul University lab proved to be the most challenging target because of its location on a heavily populated urban campus.

Military planners deliberately scheduled the airstrike for late at night, on an evening when weather and winds conditions were favorable for minimizing the chances that any chemical releases might drift into from residential districts, the officials said.

As the missile was being launched, Kurdish operatives waited in nearby neighborhoods with special sensors that could detect a toxic plume. The devices picked up faint traces of chlorine and other telltale chemicals, but there were no reports of deaths or injuries resulting either from the explosion or the attack’s aftermath, the officials said.

	<p>By late 2016, all of the Islamic State's known chemical weapons facilities had been destroyed, and most of its senior operators killed or captured. The liberation of Mosul a few months later effectively ended the program's active phase.</p> <p>Yet, it may not have eliminated the group's ambitions for chemical and biological weapons, the officials said. Some of Sabawi's former accomplices escaped the initial bombing campaign, and a few are believed to be still alive, the officials said.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>07/12 British Special Forces extrajudicial killings?</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-62083196">https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-62083196</a>
GIST	<p><b>SAS operatives in Afghanistan repeatedly killed detainees and unarmed men in suspicious circumstances, according to a BBC investigation.</b></p> <p>Newly obtained military reports suggest that one unit may have unlawfully killed 54 people in one six-month tour.</p> <p>The BBC found evidence suggesting the former head of special forces failed to pass on evidence to a murder inquiry.</p> <p>The Ministry of Defence said British troops "served with courage and professionalism in Afghanistan".</p> <p>The BBC understands that General Sir Mark Carleton-Smith, the former head of UK Special Forces, was briefed about the alleged unlawful killings but did not pass on the evidence to the Royal Military Police, even after the RMP began a murder investigation into the SAS squadron.</p> <p>General Carleton-Smith, who went on to become head of the Army before stepping down last month, declined to comment for this story.</p> <p>BBC Panorama analysed hundreds of pages of SAS operational accounts, including reports covering more than a dozen "kill or capture" raids carried out by one SAS squadron in Helmand in 2010/11.</p> <p>Individuals who served with the SAS squadron on that deployment told the BBC they witnessed the SAS operatives kill unarmed people during night raids.</p> <p>They also said they saw the operatives using so-called "drop weapons" - AK-47s planted at a scene to justify the killing of an unarmed person.</p> <p>Several people who served with special forces said that SAS squadrons were competing with each other to get the most kills, and that the squadron scrutinised by the BBC was trying to achieve a higher body count than the one it had replaced.</p> <p>Internal emails show that officers at the highest levels of special forces were aware there was concern over possible unlawful killings, but failed to report the suspicions to military police despite a legal obligation to do so.</p> <p>The Ministry of Defence said it could not comment on specific allegations, but that declining to comment should not be taken as acceptance of the allegations' factual accuracy.</p> <p>An MOD spokesperson said that British forces "served with courage and professionalism" in Afghanistan and were held to the "highest standards".</p> <p><b>A pattern of suspicious killing</b></p> <p>In 2019, the BBC and the Sunday Times <a href="#">investigated one SAS raid</a> which led to a UK court case and an order to the UK defence minister to disclose documents outlining the government's handling of the case.</p>

For this latest investigation, the BBC analysed newly obtained operational reports detailing the SAS's accounts of night raids. We found a pattern of strikingly similar reports of Afghan men being shot dead because they pulled AK-47 rifles or hand grenades from behind curtains or other furniture after having been detained.

- On 29 November 2010, the squadron killed a man who had been detained and taken back inside a building, where he "attempted to engage the force with a grenade".
- On 15 January 2011, the squadron killed a man who had been detained and taken back inside a building, where he "reached behind a mattress, pulled out a hand grenade, and attempted to throw it".
- On 7 February, the squadron killed a detainee who they said had "attempted to engage the patrol with a rifle". The same justification was given for the fatal shooting of detainees on 9 February and 13 February.
- On 16 February, the squadron killed two detainees after one pulled a grenade "from behind the curtains" and the other "picked up an AK-47 from behind a table".
- On 1 April, the squadron killed two detainees who had been sent back inside a building after one "raised an AK-47" and the other "tried to throw a grenade".

The total death toll during the squadron's six-month tour was in the triple figures. No injuries to SAS operatives were reported across all the raids scrutinised by the BBC.

A senior officer who worked at UK Special Forces headquarters told the BBC there was "real concern" over the squadron's reports.

"Too many people were being killed on night raids and the explanations didn't make sense," he said. "Once somebody is detained, they shouldn't end up dead. For it to happen over and over again was causing alarm at HQ. It was clear at the time that something was wrong."

Internal emails from the time show that officers reacted with disbelief to the reports, describing them as "quite incredible" and referring to the squadron's "latest massacre". An operations officer emailed a colleague to say that "for what must be the 10th time in the last two weeks" the squadron had sent a detainee back into a building "and he reappeared with an AK".

"Then when they walked back in to a different A [building] with another B [fighting-age male] to open the curtains he grabbed a grenade from behind a curtain and threw it at the c/s [SAS assault team]. Fortunately, it didn't go off.... this is the 8th time this has happened... You couldn't MAKE IT UP!"

As the concerns grew, one of the highest-ranking special forces officers in the country warned in a secret memo that there could be a "deliberate policy" of unlawful killing in operation. Senior leadership became so concerned that a rare formal review was commissioned of the squadron's tactics. But when a special forces officer was deployed to Afghanistan to interview personnel from the squadron, he appeared to take the SAS version of events at face value.

The BBC understands that the officer did not visit any of the scenes of the raids or interview any witnesses outside the military. Court documents show that the final report was signed off by the commanding officer of the SAS unit responsible for the suspicious killings.

None of the evidence was passed on to military police. The BBC discovered that statements containing the concerns were instead put into a restricted-access classified file for "Anecdotal information about extrajudicial killings", accessible only to a handful of senior special forces officers.

In 2012, General Carleton-Smith was appointed head of UK special forces. The BBC understands that he was briefed about the suspicious killings, but he allowed the squadron to return to Afghanistan for another six-month tour.



When the Royal Military Police launched a murder investigation in 2013 into one of the raids conducted on that tour, General Carleton-Smith did not disclose to the RMP any of the earlier concerns over unlawful killings, or the existence of the tactical review.

Colonel Oliver Lee, who was commander of the Royal Marines in Afghanistan in 2011, told the BBC that the allegations of misconduct raised by our investigation were "incredibly shocking" and merited a public inquiry. The apparent failure by special forces leadership to disclose evidence was "completely unacceptable", he said.

### **Kill or capture**

The BBC's investigation focused primarily on one six-month deployment by one SAS squadron that arrived in Afghanistan in November 2010.

The squadron was operating largely in Helmand province, one of the most dangerous places in Afghanistan, where Taliban ambushes and roadside bombs were common and Army losses were high. The squadron's primary role was carrying out deliberate detention operations (DDOs) - also known as "kill or capture" raids - designed to detain Taliban commanders and disrupt bomb-making networks.

Several sources who were involved in selecting targets for special forces operations told the BBC that there were grave problems with the intelligence behind the selection process, meaning civilians could easily end up on a target list.

According to a British representative who was present during target selection in Helmand in 2011, "Intelligence guys were coming up with lists of people that they figured were Taliban. It would be put through a short process of discussion. That was then passed onto special forces who would be given a kill or capture order."

According to the source, the targeting was pressured and rushed. "It didn't necessarily translate into let's kill them all, but certainly there was a pressure to up the game, which basically meant passing out judgements on these people quickly," he said.

During the raids, the SAS squadron used a recognised tactic in which they called everyone from inside a building out, searched and restrained them with cable-tie handcuffs, then took one male back inside to assist special forces operatives with a search.

But senior officers became concerned by the frequency with which the squadron's own accounts described detainees being taken back inside buildings and then grabbing for hidden weapons - an enemy tactic not reported by other British military forces operating in Afghanistan.

There were also concerns among officers that on a significant number of raids, there were more people killed than weapons reportedly recovered from the scene - suggesting the SAS was shooting unarmed people - and that SAS operatives might be falsifying evidence by dropping weapons at scenes after killing people.

After similar concerns were raised in Australia, a judge-led inquiry was commissioned and found "credible evidence" members of Australian Special Forces were responsible for the unlawful killing 39 people, and used 'drop weapons' in an attempt to justify shootings.

By April 2011, the concerns were so great in the UK that a senior special forces officer wrote to the director of special forces warning that there was evidence of "deliberate killing of individuals after they have been restrained" and "fabrication of evidence to suggest a lawful killing in self-defence".

Two days later, the UK Special Forces assistant chief of staff warned the director that the SAS could be operating a policy to "kill fighting-aged males on target even when they did not pose a threat."

If the suspicions were true, he wrote, the SAS squadron had "strayed into indefensible ethical and legal behaviour".

The BBC visited several of the homes raided by the SAS squadron in 2010/11. At one, in a small village in Nad Ali in Helmand, there was a bricked up guesthouse where nine Afghan men including a teenager were killed in the early hours of 7 February 2011.

The SAS operatives arrived in helicopters under the cover of darkness and approached the house from a nearby field. According to their account, insurgents opened fire at them, prompting them to shoot back and kill everyone in the guesthouse.

Only three AK-47s were recovered, according to the SAS account - one of at least six raids by the squadron on which the reported number of enemy weapons was fewer than the number of people killed.

Inside the guesthouse, what appeared to be bullet holes from the raid were clustered together on the walls low to the ground. The BBC showed photographs from the scene to ballistics experts, who said that the clusters suggested multiple rounds had been fired downward from above, and did not appear indicative of a firefight.

Leigh Neville, an expert on weapons used by UK Special Forces, said the bullet patterns suggested that "targets were low to the ground, either prone or in a sitting or crouching position close to the wall - an unusual position if they were actively involved in a firefight".

The same pattern was visible at two other locations examined by the BBC. Ballistics experts who reviewed images said the bullet holes were suggestive of execution-style killings rather than firefights.

Speaking on condition of anonymity, an RMP investigator confirmed to the BBC that they had seen photographs from the scenes and that the bullet mark patterns had raised alarm.

"You can see why we were concerned," the investigator said. "Bullet marks on the walls so low to the ground appeared to undermine the special forces' version of events."

In 2014, the RMP launched Operation Northmoor, a wide-ranging investigation into more than 600 alleged offences by British forces in Afghanistan, including a number of killings by the SAS squadron. But RMP investigators told the BBC that they were obstructed by British military in their efforts to gather evidence.

Operation Northmoor was wound down in 2017 and eventually closed in 2019. The Ministry of Defence has said that no evidence of criminality was found. Members of the investigations team told the BBC they dispute that conclusion.

The Ministry of Defence said British troops were held to the highest standards. "No new evidence has been presented, but the Service Police will consider any allegations should new evidence come to light," a spokesperson said.

In a further statement, the MoD said it believed Panorama had jumped to "unjustified conclusions from allegations that have already been fully investigated".

It said: "We have provided a detailed and comprehensive statement to Panorama, highlighting unequivocally how two Service Police operations carried out extensive and independent investigation into allegations about the conduct of UK forces in Afghanistan.

"Neither investigation found sufficient evidence to prosecute. Insinuating otherwise is irresponsible, incorrect and puts our brave Armed Forces personnel at risk both in the field and reputationally."

	"The Ministry of Defence of course stands open to considering any new evidence, there would be no obstruction. But in the absence of this, we strongly object to this subjective reporting."
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HEADLINE	<b>07/12 Sweden fatal stabbing probed as terror act</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/fatal-stabbing-sweden-annual-event-now-labeled-terror-86648873">https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/fatal-stabbing-sweden-annual-event-now-labeled-terror-86648873</a>
GIST	<p>STOCKHOLM -- The killing of a woman at an annual political event in Sweden earlier this month is now being investigated as an act of terror, authorities said.</p> <p>Sweden's domestic security agency, known by its acronym SAPO, said that the 32-year-old man who is in custody over the July 6 knife attack is now suspected of "terrorist crimes through murder," meaning SAPO has now taken over the investigation.</p> <p>Agency spokesman Gabriel Wernstedt told Swedish broadcaster SVT on Monday that "information has emerged that has led to the new suspicions." Wernstedt declined to give further details.</p> <p>The suspect, identified by Swedish media as Theodor Engström, was detained on the spot, and has confessed to the killing. SVT reported he has links to the neo-Nazi group NMR, the Nordic Resistance Movement.</p> <p>The victim, 64-year-old Ing-Marie Wiselgren, was a medical doctor and psychiatric coordinator for Sweden's municipalities and regions.</p> <p>There is no other suspect in the case, SAPO said Monday.</p> <p>The Almedalen Week is an annual event attended by leading politicians from different parties, lobbyists, pressure groups and interested members of the public. It takes place in and around Almedalen, a park in Visby, the main town of the island of Gotland, and features debates that are more informal than the ones in parliament.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>07/11 Nigeria jailbreak: shortcomings, questions</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/nigeria-jailbreak-raises-questions-insecurity-86618026">https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/nigeria-jailbreak-raises-questions-insecurity-86618026</a>
GIST	<p>ABUJA, Nigeria -- Nigerian authorities on Monday admitted shortcomings in security at a jail in the nation's capital after an attack that resulted in the escape of hundreds of inmates last week.</p> <p>The jailbreak in the Kuje area of Abuja led to the escape of 879 inmates, including 64 members of the Islamic State West Africa Province extremist group which claimed responsibility for the attack. The Islamic State-linked group is an offshoot of the Boko Haram militant group which has launched a decade-long insurgency in northeast Nigeria.</p> <p>One of the escapees from Kuje prison was arrested on Monday, Nigeria's National Drug Law Enforcement Agency said, but with at least 400 inmates still on the run, authorities are expanding the search to neighboring states.</p> <p>Nigeria is synonymous with jailbreaks which have become more rampant in recent years but it was the first time during that period that Abuja is being targeted, leaving many shocked and in fear over how safe they are as the West African nation battles a cycle of violence blamed on Islamic extremists and on armed groups mostly in the country's troubled north.</p> <p>"Kuje (prison) is the most fortified in the country," said Rauf Aregbesola, Nigeria's interior minister. "We had enough men to protect the facility but unfortunately they couldn't hold their position effectively for defense and that was the reason for the breach," the minister said after visiting the attacked prison.</p>

Even the Nigerian President Muhammadu Buhari could not provide answers to questions from citizens about how the attackers overwhelmed the security forces on duty and about how safe they are in the country of 206 million people. Buhari had more questions instead.

“How can terrorists organize, have weapons, attack a security installation and get away with it?” the Nigerian leader tweeted.

Incessant jailbreaks across Nigeria have seen more than 3,000 inmates freed since the start of 2021, media reports show. With the latest in the nation's capital, the Nigerian Correctional Service has begun an appraisal to know “where we have challenges and how to nip it in the bud,” said Umar Abubakar, a spokesman for the agency, admitting also that the jailbreak was “a fallout of the security challenges” facing Nigeria.

For many Nigerians, Abuja used to be the “shock-absorber” where they run to for safety when other parts of Nigeria suffer attack, said Usman Ahmed, a taxi driver. But recent security incidents such as a train attack that killed seven nearby in late March and the Kuje jailbreak mean “nowhere to run to,” he said.

Authorities blamed the train attack and the jailbreak on extremist rebels that have waged an insurgency in northeast Nigeria for more than a decade. Those rebels are now expanding their reach beyond the northeast region to other parts of Nigeria including the northcentral region where Abuja is located, according to analysts.

“There are several terrorist cells already operating in northcentral, northwest and northeastern parts of Nigeria,” said Oluwaseyi Adetayo, a former officer of the Nigerian secret police Department of State Services now working as a security expert. “Many of them are already being activated.”

In the wake of the Kuje jailbreak, the Nigeria police said they have increased surveillance and security patrols in the nation’s capital but many are asking how long before another attack happens.

“If you want to encircle Abuja, you need to outline towns to support that kind of largescale operation, so currently all the states bordering Abuja are in turmoil,” said Confidence MacHarry with the Lagos-based SBM Intelligence firm.

In the Kuje area of Abuja, residents told The Associated Press that the increased security presence in the town does not make them feel safer.

“The residents in Abuja are afraid, not only in Kuje,” said Paschal Obi whose family of five has lived in the Kuje town for years. “Some (escapees) are still hanging around Abuja ... they have not gone to their destinations. Personally, I am afraid and it is only God that can take control.”

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## Suspicious, Unusual

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HEADLINE	07/10 What are the Uber files?
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/news/2022/jul/10/what-are-the-uber-files-guide">https://www.theguardian.com/news/2022/jul/10/what-are-the-uber-files-guide</a>
GIST	<p>The <a href="#">Uber</a> files is a global investigation into a trove of 124,000 confidential documents from the tech company that were leaked to the Guardian. The data reveals how Uber flouted the law, duped police, exploited violence against drivers and secretly lobbied governments across the world.</p> <p>The leak consists of emails, iMessages and WhatsApp exchanges between the Silicon Valley giant’s most senior executives, as well as memos, presentations, notebooks, briefing papers and invoices.</p>

The files cover 40 countries and span [from 2013 to 2017](#), the period in which Uber went from a plucky startup to a global behemoth, brute-forcing its way into cities around the world with little regard for taxi regulations.

To facilitate a global investigation, the Guardian shared the data with 180 journalists at more than 40 media organisations via the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists (ICIJ).

### What do they reveal?

- The cache of more than 124,000 internal Uber files [lays bare the ethically questionable practices](#) through which the company barged its way into new markets, often where existing laws or regulations made its operations illegal, before lobbying aggressively for those same laws or regulations to be altered to accommodate it.
- As economy minister, [Emmanuel Macron went to extraordinary lengths to support Uber](#) and its campaign to disrupt France's closed-shop taxi industry, even telling the company he had brokered a "deal" with its opponents in the French cabinet.
- Senior executives at Uber [ordered the use of a "kill switch"](#) to prevent police and regulators from accessing sensitive data during raids on its offices in at least six countries.
- Two of Barack Obama's most senior presidential campaign advisers, David Plouffe and Jim Messina, [discussed helping Uber get to access leaders, officials and diplomats](#).
- The former vice-president of the European Commission Neelie Kroes [secretly helped Uber to lobby a string of top Dutch politicians](#), including the country's prime minister. Her relationship with the company was so sensitive that its top European lobbyist warned it was "highly confidential and should not be discussed outside this group".
- At least six UK government ministers, including the then chancellor, George Osborne, and the future health secretary Matt Hancock, [did not declare secret meetings](#) at which they were lobbied by Uber.
- The inside story of [how Uber used its connections to the Conservative party to lobby Boris Johnson](#) in a rearguard effort to stop Transport for London introducing new regulations.
- One of Uber's [top executives quit amid questions](#) for the company about whether its European operations were structured in a way that avoided tax.

### Who leaked the data?

Mark MacGann, Uber's former chief lobbyist in Europe, the Middle East and Africa, [said he decided to speak out](#) because he believed Uber's senior executives knowingly flouted laws in dozens of countries and "sold people a lie" about the economic benefits to drivers of the company's gig economy model.

The 52-year-old acknowledged he was part of Uber's top team at the time – and is not without blame for the conduct he describes. He said he was partly motivated by remorse.

"I regret being part of a group of people which massaged the facts to earn the trust of drivers, of consumers and of political elites," he said. "I should have shown more common sense and pushed harder to stop the craziness. It is my duty to speak up and help governments and parliamentarians right some fundamental wrongs. Morally, I had no choice in the matter."

### Why does the period covered by the leak matter?

The five-year span covered by the data covered a crucial period of Uber's expansion.

When the app first launched publicly in San Francisco in 2010, Uber customers could only hire luxury black vehicles. The introduction the following year of UberX, which enabled drivers to pick up passengers in their own cars, quickly gained traction and by early 2013 the service was operating in more than 30 locations – mostly in the US.

It was around this point that Uber sought to rapidly expand overseas. The period covered by the leaked data was marked by frenzied growth, as Uber used its record venture capital investments to subsidise journeys in cities across the world. By June 2017, when its controversial co-founder [Travis Kalanick](#) resigned as chief executive, Uber was operating in more than 600 locations.

Kalanick's replacement, Dara Khosrowshahi, set out to prove to shareholders that the company could deliver profitable growth. Five years later, Uber – now valued at \$45bn – provides on-demand transport in more than 10,000 cities.

#### **How have Uber and Travis Kalanick responded to the investigation?**

[In a statement](#), Uber's senior vice-president of public affairs, Jill Hazelbaker, said: "We have not and will not make excuses for past behaviour that is clearly not in line with our present values. Instead, we ask the public to judge us by what we've done over the last five years and what we will do in the years to come."

She continued: "Uber is now one of the largest platforms for work in the world and an integral part of everyday life for over 100 million people. We've moved from an era of confrontation to one of collaboration, demonstrating a willingness to come to the table and find common ground with former opponents, including labour unions and taxi companies."

"We are now regulated in more than 10,000 cities around the world, working at all levels of government to improve the lives of those using our platform and the cities we serve."

[In a separate statement](#), Travis Kalanick's spokesperson said he "never authorised any actions or programs that would obstruct justice in any country", and he "never suggested that Uber should take advantage of violence at the expense of driver safety. Any accusation that Mr Kalanick directed, engaged in, or was involved in any of these activities is completely false."

"The reality was that Uber's expansion initiatives were led by over a hundred leaders in dozens of countries around the world and at all times under the direct oversight and with the full approval of Uber's robust legal, policy, and compliance groups."

The spokesperson added: "When Mr Kalanick co-founded Uber in 2009, he and the rest of the Uber team pioneered an industry that has now become a verb. To do this required a change of the status quo, as Uber became a serious competitor in an industry where competition had been historically outlawed."

"As a natural and foreseeable result, entrenched industry interests all over the world fought to prevent the much-needed development of the transportation industry."

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HEADLINE	<b>07/11 Whistleblower: Uber sold people a lie</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/news/2022/jul/11/uber-files-whistleblower-lobbyist-mark-macgann">https://www.theguardian.com/news/2022/jul/11/uber-files-whistleblower-lobbyist-mark-macgann</a>
GIST	<p>Mark MacGann, a career lobbyist who led Uber's efforts to win over governments across Europe, the Middle East and Africa, has come forward to identify himself as the source who leaked more than 124,000 company files to the Guardian.</p> <p>MacGann decided to speak out, he says, because he believes Uber <a href="#">knowingly flouted laws</a> in dozens of countries and misled people about the benefits to drivers of the company's gig-economy model.</p> <p>The 52-year-old acknowledges he was part of Uber's top team at the time – and is not without blame for the conduct he describes. In an exclusive interview with the Guardian, he said he was partly motivated by remorse.</p> <p>"I am partly responsible," he said. "I was the one talking to governments, I was the one pushing this with the media, I was the one telling people that they should change the rules because drivers were going to benefit and people were going to get so much economic opportunity."</p> <p>"When that turned out not to be the case – we had actually sold people a lie – how can you have a clear conscience if you don't stand up and own your contribution to how people are being treated today?"</p>



The senior role MacGann held at Uber between 2014 and 2016 put him at the heart of decisions taken at the highest levels of the company during the period in which it was forcing its way into markets in violation of taxi-licensing laws. He oversaw Uber's attempts to persuade governments to change taxi regulations and create a more favourable business environment in more than 40 countries.

He said the ease with which Uber penetrated the highest echelons of power in countries such as the UK, France and Russia was "intoxicating" but also "deeply unfair" and "anti-democratic".

In his wide-ranging interview, MacGann detailed the personal journey that led him to leak the data years after leaving Uber.

"I regret being part of a group of people which massaged the facts to earn the trust of drivers, of consumers and of political elites," he said. "I should have shown more common sense and pushed harder to stop the craziness. It is my duty to [now] speak up and help governments and parliamentarians right some fundamental wrongs. Morally, I had no choice in the matter."

The Guardian [led a global investigation](#) into the leaked Uber files, sharing the data with media organisations around the world via the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists (ICIJ).

After MacGann identified himself as the whistleblower, Uber said: "We understand that Mark has personal regrets about his years of steadfast loyalty to our previous leadership, but he is in no position to speak credibly about Uber today."

Responding to the wider investigation, Uber [acknowledged](#) past failings but insisted the company had transformed since 2017 under the leadership of its new chief executive, Dara Khosrowshahi. "We have not and will not make excuses for past behaviour that is clearly not in line with our present values," a spokesperson said.

The Uber files consists of confidential company data that MacGann had access to at Uber. It includes company presentations, briefing notes, security reports and tens of thousands of emails and WhatsApp, iMessage and chat exchanges between the company's most senior staff at the time.

They include Travis Kalanick, Uber's combative co-founder and then chief executive, David Plouffe, a former Barack Obama campaign aide who became a senior vice-president at Uber, and Rachel Whetstone, a British PR executive who has also held senior roles at Google, Facebook and now Netflix.

When MacGann departed Uber in 2016, Whetstone described him as "a wonderful leader". Plouffe called him a "talented public policy professional" and "terrific advocate for Uber".

The one-time cheerleader-in-chief for Uber in Europe, MacGann now looks set to become one of its sharpest critics.

His profile as a senior executive and political insider make him an unusual whistleblower. So, too, does the fact he actively participated in some of the wrongdoing he is seeking to expose – and the fact it took him more than five years after leaving the company to speak out.

The process through which he came to re-evaluate what he witnessed at Uber was a gradual one, he says. "When I decided I had an obligation to speak up, I then went about finding the most effective, impactful way in which to do that. Doing what I am doing isn't easy, and I hesitated. That said, there's no statute of limitations on doing the right thing."

MacGann is understood to have recently reached an out-of-court settlement with Uber after a legal dispute relating to his remuneration. He said he was prohibited from discussing his legal dispute but acknowledged he had had personal grievances with the company, which he alleges undervalued his role as an interlocutor with government and failed in its duty of care to him.

He accuses Uber under Kalanick's leadership of adopting a confrontational strategy with opponents in taxi industries, that left him personally exposed. As a public face of Uber in Europe, MacGann bore the brunt of what became a fierce backlash against the company in countries including France, Belgium, Italy and Spain.

Amid threats to his life, he was given bodyguard protection. His experience of working at Uber, he says, took a mental toll and contributed to a subsequent diagnosis of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

### **Brazenly breaking the law**

A Brussels insider, MacGann was an obvious pick to lead Uber's government relations in the Europe, Middle East and Africa (EMEA) region in 2014. Born in Ireland, he speaks several languages and possessed an impressive contacts book built up over two decades in lobbying and public affairs.

MacGann had worked at established public policy firms such as Weber Shandwick and Brunswick, and had run DigitalEurope, a trade association that advocated for companies such as Apple, Microsoft and Sony. His most recent job had been as senior vice-president at the New York Stock Exchange on a salary of \$750,000 a year.

MacGann took a significant salary cut to work at Uber for €160,000. But like all senior executives joining the company back then, the financial reward was in the promise of stock options that could be worth millions if Uber realised its global ambitions.

Uber and its investors were eyeing vast returns if the tech company succeeded in its mission to deregulate markets, monopolise cities, transform transit systems and one day even replace drivers with autonomous vehicles. The plan, MacGann acknowledges, required Uber to flout the law in cities in which regulated taxi markets required hard-to-get licences to drive a cab.

"The company approach in these places was essentially to break the law, show how amazing Uber's service was, and then change the law. My job was to go above the heads of city officials, build relations with the top level of government, and negotiate. It was also to deal with the fallout."

MacGann started work for Uber around the summer of 2014, when he worked on contract for a European lobbying consultancy that Uber had hired to oversee government relations outside the US. In October 2014, Uber brought him in-house and put him in charge of public policy for the EMEA region.

On his first day on staff, MacGann was in an Uber from London City airport when he got his first taste of the startup's laissez-faire approach to privacy. After emailing a senior executive to tell them he was in traffic, MacGann received the reply: "I'm watching you on Heaven – already saw the ETA!"

"Heaven", otherwise known as "God View", was the codeword Uber employees used at the time for a tool that allowed staff to surreptitiously use the app's backend technology to surveil the real-time movements of any user in the world.

"It felt like children playing around with powerful surveillance technology," said MacGann. "Even back then it was dawning on me this was a rogue company."

In its statement, Uber said tools such as God View, which it stopped using in 2017, "should never have been used". A spokesperson for Kalanick said it would be false to suggest he ever "directed illegal or improper conduct".

The Uber files contain some instances in which MacGann pushes back at the company's operations and decisions. But, for the most part, the documents show him expressing little dissent over the company's hardball tactics, and on some occasions he appears directly involved in wrongdoing.

He describes himself as having been “drunk on the Kool-Aid” at Uber, a company he alleges did not encourage dissent or criticism. But he does not dispute he was at the heart of many of the controversies that have been revealed by his data leak.

“I believed in the dream we were pushing, and I overdosed on the enthusiasm,” he said. “I was working 20 hours a day, seven days a week, constantly on planes, in meetings, on video conference calls. I didn’t stop to take a step back.”

His whirlwind stint at the company involved meetings with prime ministers, presidents, transport and economy ministers, EU commissioners, mayors and city regulators.

MacGann said most senior politicians were instinctively supportive of Uber, viewing the tech company as offering an innovative new platform that could allow for flexible working and help reboot economies after the financial crisis.

However, it was a more mixed story in France, where Uber’s unlicensed service prompted taxi driver riots and divided the cabinet of the then president, François Hollande.

On one side was Bernard Cazeneuve, the minister of the interior, who according to MacGann once summoned him to his office and threatened him with jail, saying: “I will hold you personally and criminally responsible if you do not shut it down by the end of the week.”

On the opposing side of the debate was Emmanuel Macron, the pro-tech, pro-business economy minister who, the leak reveals, became something of a secret weapon for Uber.

The data includes text message exchanges between MacGann and Macron, who was working behind the scenes to assist the US tech company. In one exchange, MacGann asks for Macron’s help in the midst of a raid on the company’s offices. In another he complains about an apparent ban on its services in Marseille.

Macron told MacGann he would “personally” look into the matter. “At this point, let’s stay calm,” the minister said.

MacGann recalls Macron as being “the only person who gave us the time of day ... So he was a massive breath of fresh air.”

Macron did not respond to detailed questions about his relationship with Uber. A spokesperson said his ministerial duties at the time “naturally led him to meet and interact with many companies” engaged in the service sector.

After leaving Uber, MacGann maintained relations with Macron and helped raise funds for his La République En Marche party in 2016. He says his political support for the French president was a personal decision and had “absolutely nothing to do with Uber”. They continued to exchange text messages with one another up to as recently as April this year.

### **‘Speed dating for elites’**

The French president is not the only political figure who knows MacGann. He is on first-name terms with two former EU commissioners, Neelie Kroes and Peter Mandelson. After leaving Uber, MacGann maintained a business relationship with Lord Mandelson, a former Labour cabinet minister.

MacGann is also a familiar face among VIPs who attend the World Economic Forum in Davos, which he describes as “speed dating for elites”. He recalls persuading an initially reluctant Kalanick to attend the gathering in the Swiss Alps in 2016.

“For a lobbyist, Davos is a wonderful competitive advantage that only money can buy,” he said. “Politicians don’t have a retinue of advisers and civil servants hanging around taking notes.”

Uber's executives met with the Israeli prime minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, the Irish taoiseach, Enda Kenny, and the UK chancellor, George Osborne. Securing those meetings, MacGann said, was "a piece of cake". "Uber was considered hot property." So much so that when Kalanick met Joe Biden at the Swiss resort it was at the US vice-president's request.

The Uber files reveal that Kalanick fumed when he was kept waiting by Biden, texting other Uber executives: "I've had my people let him know that every minute late he is, is one less minute he will have with me."

However, it was another Kalanick text in the leak – in which the former CEO appears to advocate sending Uber drivers to a protest in France, despite the risk of violence – that has sparked headlines across the world.

Warned by MacGann and Whetstone that encouraging Uber drivers to protest amid violent taxi strikes in Paris risked putting them at risk, Kalanick replied: "I think it's worth it. Violence guarantee[s] success."

MacGann called Kalanick's instruction to stage an act of civil disobedience with French Uber drivers, despite the risks, as a "dangerous" and "selfish" tactic. "He was not the guy on the street who was being threatened, who was being attacked, who was being beaten up."

Kalanick's spokesperson said he "never suggested that Uber should take advantage of violence at the expense of driver safety" and any suggestion he was involved in such activity would be completely false. Uber acknowledged past mistakes, but said no one at the company, including Kalanick, wanted violence against Uber drivers.

MacGann insists that Uber drivers were seen by some at the company as pawns who could be used to put pressure on governments. "And if that meant Uber drivers going on strike, Uber drivers doing a demo in the streets, Uber drivers blocking Barcelona, blocking Berlin, blocking Paris, then that was the way to go," he said. "In a sense, it was considered beneficial to weaponise Uber drivers in this way."

The files show MacGann's fingerprints on this strategy, too. In one email, he praised staffers in Amsterdam who leaked stories to the press about attacks on drivers to "keep the violence narrative" and pressure the Dutch government.

Looking back, MacGann said: "I am disgusted and ashamed that I was a party to the trivialisation of such violence."

### **A parting of ways**

One of the worst flashpoints in Europe was at Brussels Midi train station, where Uber drivers lingered to pick up passengers who would otherwise be queueing at a regulated taxi rank. MacGann was first recognised there on 27 April 2015.

"Got spotted by a bunch of taxi drivers at the train station arriving from London," he emailed a colleague that day. "Seven of them followed me as I went to get my Uber, hurling insults and spitting ... One of them ran after me for a while, intending to hurt my driver."

The colleague replied: "Thank God you made it ... This weekend Uber driver and taxi driver got into a fistfight. Getting intense in Brussels."

The threats intensified over subsequent weeks. Emails show alarm at the company after a taxi driver trailed MacGann's limousine to his apartment in Brussels and posted his home address on a "stop Uber" Facebook group in Belgium. Taxi drivers snapped surveillance-style photos of MacGann outside a hotel with friends and uploaded them to the internet.

In August that year, a security report commissioned by Uber mentioned rumours that MacGann and another Uber executive were going to be "taken off the streets by a core group of taxi drivers".

Uber gave MacGann a personal team of bodyguards. An email states that between September and November 2015, the security team spent 619 hours shepherding him in Belgium alone, while Uber also beefed up security for foreign trips.

During a protest in Brussels, about 100 taxi drivers gathered outside MacGann's office in the city and blocked the road. An Uber security report described how an initially relaxed atmosphere became "more grim". Fireworks were let off and riot police charged protesters.

Taxi drivers at the protest attached "wanted" posters on the sides of their cars. They displayed photos of MacGann and two other Uber executives. The caption read: "International criminals."

In October 2015, MacGann emailed a colleague: "I have had bodyguards full-time now for five months and it is becoming very stressful." A week later, he told Plouffe and Whetstone of his intention to resign. He officially departed four months later, on 12 February 2016.

It seemed an amicable split. Publicly, he expressed no regrets and used his Facebook page to lavish praise on Kalanick.

"Toughest boss I ever had and I'm a stronger leader for it," he said, adding there was "no thing" he would change about his time at Uber. "Forget the hyperbole in the media; forget the intrigue; think about how pushing a button and getting a ride makes your life better."

In his departure email to colleagues, MacGann described himself as "a strong believer in Uber's mission".

Uber publicly commended MacGann's work and asked him to stay on as a consultant.

He was given a new job title – senior board adviser – and retained his Uber-provided emails, laptops and phones.

That role ended in August 2016, after which MacGann took on a new job at a telecoms company and started his own business venture. It was a full year after leaving Uber that, MacGann says, he experienced his most "terrifying" ordeal as a perceived representative of the cab-hailing firm.

### **'MacGann, we will get you'**

The incident outside Brussels Midi station was recorded in a police report, Uber emails and media reports. It took place between 11.45am and 12.15pm on 19 September 2017, shortly after MacGann arrived at the station.

As he walked towards his waiting Uber, taxi drivers approached him and ordered him not to get into the car. One grabbed him by the arms to stop him from putting his bags in. Concerned for his safety, MacGann asked the Uber driver to lock the doors when he was in the car.

Several more taxi drivers joined the fray, surrounding the car. MacGann called the police. A security report commissioned by Uber questioned whether the taxi drivers had recognised him. But he recalls the drivers yelling: "MacGann, we will get you, we know where you live."

He recalls them thumping on the windows and rocking the car from side to side. Three taxi drivers were taken to the police station, but no further action was taken.

MacGann said he was left fearing for his life – and that of his Uber driver, who "was shaking and in tears, scared for his life". "These taxi drivers had his licence number, they could come after him again. It just seemed to me that Uber viewed this guy as expendable supply – not an employee with rights."

Shortly afterwards, MacGann received an anonymous threat on Twitter: "One day police won't be there and you'll be alone. And we will see if money will help you."

MacGann held his former employer responsible. “I felt that Uber had caused this, by its ‘success at all costs approach’ that encouraged confrontations between Uber and taxi drivers ... I started to feel it was indicative of Uber’s wider relationship with drivers, putting them in harm’s way for their own financial interests.”

By mid-2018, MacGann said, the death of a close friend contributed to a deterioration in his mental health. A medical report from March 2019 said a subsequent diagnosis of PTSD was “evidently linked and impacted by the professional stress he had to endure” during his time at Uber.

MacGann said that months of treatment and therapy between 2018 and 2019 – and an enforced period of personal reflection – led him to reassess his time at Uber. “I’d stepped off the corporate hamster wheel for the first time in decades. I emerged with a new sense of clarity about everything at Uber.”

No longer living the fast-paced life of a corporate executive, MacGann had time to listen more carefully to the stories of Uber drivers who were ferrying him around. He credits those conversations with changing his understanding of what the company used to call “driver economics”.

In its statement, Uber’s spokesperson said “driver earnings globally are at or near all-time highs today” and that Uber’s interests were “aligned with drivers, ensuring they have a positive experience earning on the platform”. If drivers were dissatisfied with its platform, she added, “they can and do choose to earn somewhere else”.

In the statement released after MacGann identified himself as the whistleblower, Uber said his litigation against the company was “an attempt, among other things, to get paid a bonus he claimed to be owed for his work at Uber. That lawsuit recently ended with him being paid €550,000. It is noteworthy that Mark felt compelled to ‘blow the whistle’ only after his cheque cleared.”

MacGann first contacted the Guardian five months before his legal dispute with Uber was settled and placed no restriction on when journalists could use the leaked data. He disputes Uber’s claim that he has been paid €550,000, and said he was still awaiting his full payout from the settlement.

### **Sharing secrets**

In February 2020, MacGann, increasingly angered by what he viewed as the mistreatment of drivers, tried to take action. Uber was appealing against a decision by Transport for London (TfL) to refuse the company a licence in the capital, on the grounds it failed to meet the “fit and proper” test.

Emailing the mayor’s office, MacGann explained he was a former Uber executive with information to share in a “private and non-sensationalist manner, given my intimate knowledge of the company”. MacGann said he felt “frustrated” when his attempt to formally raise concerns about Uber did not receive a reply.

In February 2021, MacGann went a step further. After reading about a French lawyer who was bringing a class action lawsuit against Uber on behalf of drivers, MacGann got in touch and offered to provide information to help their case. The lawyer visited him at his home and MacGann allowed him to take photographs of a small sample of Uber documents he had stored on his old computer.

His relationship with the French lawyer turned out to be short-lived. But the dam had been broken. MacGann realised quite how many of Uber’s secrets he was sitting on.

In January 2022, Uber’s former top lobbyist travelled to Geneva and met with reporters from the Guardian.

He opened two suitcases and pulled out laptops, hard drives, iPhones and bundles of paper. He warned it would take a few days, at best, to explain everything he knew. “I’ve seen some really shady shit, to use one of the Silicon Valley expressions.”



HEADLINE	<b>07/11 Herbicide found in majority urine samples</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.cbsnews.com/news/glyphosate-roundup-urine-samples-bayer-monsanto-weed-killing-chemical/">https://www.cbsnews.com/news/glyphosate-roundup-urine-samples-bayer-monsanto-weed-killing-chemical/</a>
GIST	<p>A widely used but controversial herbicide linked to cancer is showing up in people, with a government study finding glyphosate in more than 80% of urine samples from U.S. kids and adults.</p> <p>Part of a Centers for Disease Control and Prevention <a href="#">program</a>, the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey <a href="#">found</a> glyphosate in 1,885 of 2,310 urine samples representative of the population at large. Nearly a third of the samples came from kids, ranging in age from six to 18.</p> <p>"Glyphosate is the most widely used herbicide in the country, yet until now we had very little data on exposure," Alexis Temkin, a toxicologist at the Environmental Working Group, <a href="#">said</a> Monday in a statement. "Children in the U.S. are regularly exposed to this cancer-causing weedkiller through the food they eat virtually every day."</p> <p>The weed-killing chemical is the active ingredient in the widely used Roundup brand, which was inherited by German pharmaceutical company Bayer when it <a href="#">purchased American agrochemical giant Monsanto</a> in 2018.</p> <p>The Supreme Court last month <a href="#">rejected a bid by Bayer to shut down thousands</a> of lawsuits claiming the weedkiller causes cancer. The high court's justices let stand a \$25 million judgement on behalf of a California man who claims he developed non-Hodgkin's lymphoma from decades of using Roundup on his property.</p> <p>The Environmental Protection Agency in 2020 found that glyphosate does not pose a serious health risk and is "not likely" to cause cancer in humans, but a federal appeals court last month ordered the EPA to reexamine its findings.</p> <p>Still, Bayer has won four consecutive trials in state court against people claiming they got cancer from using Roundup, with a recent verdict favoring the company coming in Oregon.</p> <p>The International Agency for Research on Cancer – part of the World Health Organization — classifies glyphosate as "probably carcinogenic to humans."</p> <p>Bayer maintains the product is safe, but said that it would replace glyphosate in Roundup for residential use beginning in 2023. Products containing glyphosate will still be available for professional and farm use.</p> <p>Traces of glyphosate has been found in a variety of <a href="#">food, including baby formula</a>, as well as in <a href="#">organic beer and wine</a> and in <a href="#">hummus and chickpeas</a>.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>07/11 Lake Mead shrinks to record low in drought</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.cbsnews.com/news/lake-mead-drought-water-crisis-climate-change/">https://www.cbsnews.com/news/lake-mead-drought-water-crisis-climate-change/</a>
GIST	<p>Lake Mead, the largest U.S. reservoir, has shrunk to a record low amid a punishing drought and the demands of 40 million people in seven states who are <a href="#">sucking</a> the Colorado River dry.</p> <p>The megadrought in the U.S. West has been worsened by climate change. Wildfire season has grown longer, blazes have become more intense and scorching temperatures have broken records — and as a result, lakes are shriveling.</p> <p>Receding waters of Lake Mead National Recreation Area have <a href="#">revealed</a> the <a href="#">skeletal remains</a> of two people along with countless desiccated fish and what has become a graveyard of forgotten and stranded watercraft.</p>

Houseboats, sailboats and [motorboats](#) have been beached, creating a surreal scene in an otherwise rugged desert landscape. A buoy that once marked a no-boat-zone sits in the dirt, with not a drop of water anywhere in view. Even a sunken World War II-era craft that once surveyed the lake has emerged from the ebbing waters.

The mighty Colorado River that divides Nevada from Arizona once flowed beneath the walls of Black Canyon until the Hoover Dam was erected in 1935 for irrigation, flood control and hydropower.

The reservoir is now below 30% of capacity. Its level has dropped 170 feet since reaching a high-water mark in 1983, leaving a bright white line of mineral deposits on the brown canyon walls that looms over passing motor boats as high as a 15-story building.

Most of the boat ramps have been gated and marina docks moved into deeper waters. A sign that marks the water level in 2002 stands above a road that descends to boat slips in the distance.

The dropping water levels have consequences not only for the cities that depend on the future source of water, but also for boaters who have to navigate shallow waters and avoid islands and sandbars that lurk below the surface before emerging.

Craig Miller was motoring around on his houseboat last month when the engine died and he floated to shore. Within days, the knee deep water where his boat came to a rest was gone.

"It's amazing how fast the water went down," Miller said. "I was landlocked."

He bought pumps and tried to dredge the sand around the boat to create a channel to the water, but couldn't stay ahead. A tow from shallow waters, originally estimated at \$4,000, ballooned to a \$20,000 salvage job when he became marooned.

Miller spent three weeks on the beached boat, spending much of it soaking in the water to stay cool in the triple-digit heat. The day before he was told by park rangers that he had to get the boat off the sand, Dave Sparks, a social media personality known as Heavy D, who had seen a video about Miller's plight, showed up with a crew to pull the boat from the shore and tow it to a marina.

Others have flocked to the dried lake bed for selfies in the haunting landscape or against the backdrop of what looks like a colossal ring around a bathtub.

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## Crime, Criminals

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HEADLINE	07/12 Abe shooting motive linked to Moonies?
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/jul/12/shinzo-abe-shooting-suspects-motive-casts-spotlight-on-moonies-links-to-politicians">https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/jul/12/shinzo-abe-shooting-suspects-motive-casts-spotlight-on-moonies-links-to-politicians</a>
GIST	<p>The apparent motive given by the man accused of assassinating <a href="#">Shinzo Abe</a> has cast a spotlight on the Unification church and its ties to politicians.</p> <p>Tetsuya Yamagami has confessed to killing the former Japanese prime minister during a campaign speech on Friday. He blamed the global religious movement – whose members are often referred to as Moonies – for bankrupting his family, and believed that Abe had championed its activities in <a href="#">Japan</a>.</p> <p>The Japan branch of the church has confirmed that <a href="#">Yamagami's mother is a member</a>, but declined to comment on the suspect's claims that she had made a "huge donation" more than 20 years ago that left the family struggling financially.</p>

The branch's president, Tomihiro Tanaka, told a press conference that Yamagami's mother became a follower in the late 1990s, adding that the family had suffered financial ruin around 2002.

The organisation's official name is the Family Federation for World Peace and Unification, although it is better known as the Unification church. It was founded in South Korea in 1954 by Sun Myung Moon, whose strident anti-communism would lead him to build ties with conservative politicians around the world, including in Japan.

Moon, who died in 2012, said he had had a vision aged 15 in which he was told by Jesus to complete his unfulfilled mission to restore humanity to a state of "sinless" purity.

The church's early adherents were effective recruiters, and membership soared from an initial group of 100 missionaries to around 10,000 in a few years.

Often described as a cult motivated by financial gain, the church became known for conducting mass weddings in huge sports stadiums – involving thousands of couples who were meeting for the first time – and at one time claimed to have about 3 million followers worldwide.

But global membership of the church, whose teachings comprise new interpretations of the Bible, has fallen sharply to several hundred thousand from its 1980s peak, according to some experts.

Its connection to Japan is inseparable from the instability of the postwar years, when conservative politicians sought to build alliances that they believed would prevent the country from embracing communism.

They included Abe's grandfather, Nobusuke Kishi, who reportedly set up an organisation with ties to the church. It was Kishi's decision to court Moon and his followers in Japan that reportedly drove Yamagami to target his grandson.

Yamagami reportedly told investigators that he had fired a shot from a homemade gun at a Unification church facility near his home the day before he targeted Abe. The Asahi Shimbun quoted residents as saying they had heard a loud bang in the early hours of 7 July.

The Japan chapter was founded in 1959 – the penultimate year of Kishi's three-year term as prime minister – as the church sent missionaries to Japan and the US to forge links with influential politicians and business leaders.

Last September Abe delivered a congratulatory address via video link at an event organised by an affiliate, the Universal Peace Federation. Donald Trump is among other conservative politicians who have publicly associated themselves with the church.

Abe had been criticised for speaking at events organised by church affiliates. Last year lawyers representing people who say they lost money because of the church filed a letter of protest after he delivered the video message. They also protested when Abe sent a telegram to a mass wedding in 2006.

Moon, who moved to the US in the early 1970s, had longstanding ties to Japan, having studied engineering at a high school in Tokyo. He was indicted on tax evasion charges in the US in 1981 and served 11 months in prison.

In 2008, Moon passed control of the church to his youngest son, Hyung Jin Moon, who later formed a breakaway organisation, the Sanctuary church, after falling out with his mother, Hak Ja Han. She now controls the Unification church.

The police have not publicly identified the group Yamagami blamed for his family's financial troubles, and most Japanese media organisations refrained from naming it until Monday's press conference.

HEADLINE	<b>07/11 Indictment: China targeting dissidents in US</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2022/jul/11/indictment-reveals-new-details-chinese-targeting-d/">https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2022/jul/11/indictment-reveals-new-details-chinese-targeting-d/</a>
GIST	<p>China's government used American private investigators to harass dissidents in the United States, according to a federal indictment of five people made public last week.</p> <p>The indictment identified five men who are charged with acting as foreign agents of China in a scheme to monitor and harass three dissidents who were not identified by name.</p> <p>Breon Peace, U.S. attorney for the Eastern District of New York, said the case involves "a multifaceted campaign to silence, harass, discredit and spy on U.S. residents for exercising their freedom of speech."</p> <p>The operation was aided by a current U.S. law enforcement officer who provided information from a government database to those in charge in the case, as well as a private investigator who supplied confidential information on the dissidents, Mr. Peace said.</p> <p>Those involved in the case also lied to investigators and tried to destroy evidence of their harassment operation, Mr. Peace said in making the indictment public last week.</p> <p>According to court documents in the case, the five men were part of what the Justice Department calls a "transnational repression" campaign that has been a key feature of Chinese intelligence operations in the United States to silence dissidents.</p> <p>The initial criminal complaint in the case involved three people, Fan "Frank" Liu, Matthew Ziburis and Qiang "Jason" Sun. The indictment identified two new defendants, Craig Miller and Derrick Taylor.</p> <p>Mr. Miller worked as a 15-year employee of the Department of Homeland Security as a deportation officer for the department's enforcement and removal operations in Minneapolis. Mr. Taylor is a retired DHS law enforcement agent and now works as a private investigator in Irvine, California.</p> <p>Both were arrested in June and charged with obstruction of justice after being questioned by FBI agents about accessing a restricted law enforcement database on Chinese dissidents.</p> <p>The men claimed they obtained the confidential data from the dark web.</p> <p>Mr. Liu is president of a media company in New York City and Mr. Ziburis is a former correctional officer and bodyguard. Mr. Sun is based in China and works for a technology company.</p> <p>The spying operation was directed by Mr. Sun and carried out by Mr. Liu and Mr. Ziburis "to discredit pro-democracy PRC dissidents" in New York, California and Indiana by spreading negative information about them in public. Mr. Liu and Mr. Ziburis were arrested in March, while Mr. Sun remains at large.</p> <p>In one case, Mr. Liu allegedly paid a private investigator in Queens to bribe an IRS agent to obtain federal tax returns on one dissident. Instead, the private investigator went to authorities and cooperated in the investigation.</p> <p>The five men also planned to destroy artwork of a Chinese dissident critical of the government. The art involved a sculpture portraying President Xi Jinping as a coronavirus molecule.</p> <p>The sculpture was destroyed in the spring of 2021.</p> <p>"Sun paid both Liu and Ziburis for these efforts to stalk, harass and surveil dissidents residing in the United States," the Justice Department said in a statement announcing the indictment.</p>

	<p>In another case, three of the defendants allegedly used electronic means to spy on pro-democracy activists. Mr. Ziburis posed as an art dealer interested in buying artwork from one dissident and helped place surveillance cameras and GPS tracking devices on the dissident's car and workplace.</p> <p>"While in the PRC, Sun watched the live video feed and location data from these devices," the statement said.</p> <p>The defendants also planned to use similar gear on two other dissidents.</p> <p>If convicted of the charges, all five people face more than 20 years in prison.</p> <p>Lawyers for Mr. Liu and Mr. Ziburis did not immediately respond to a request for comment. Lawyers for the other defendants also could not be reached for comment.</p> <p>Michael J. Driscoll, FBI assistant in New York said the defendants had "committed various acts in furtherance of a transnational repression scheme aimed at silencing the free speech of [Chinese] dissidents on U.S. soil."</p> <p>"One of the defendants was even a federal law enforcement officer who allegedly accessed government databases to aid the illegal campaign in direct conflict with his duty to protect the rights of all U.S. residents," he added.</p> <p>To counter foreign agents engaged in harassing dissidents, the FBI set up a counterintelligence website to help those seeking to report a crime.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>07/11 Staff shortage King Co. jail booking center</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.kiro7.com/news/local/king-county-jail-booking-center-shuts-down-eight-hours/NZWCDXEZ4JFFLFPCBWE4LJE2TM/">https://www.kiro7.com/news/local/king-county-jail-booking-center-shuts-down-eight-hours/NZWCDXEZ4JFFLFPCBWE4LJE2TM/</a>
GIST	<p>KING COUNTY, Wash. — With the closure of the Regional Justice Center in Kent, King County is down to just one place to book people, the jail in Seattle. On Sunday night, that critical facility shut down without notice.</p> <p>Dennis Folk, president of the King County Corrections Guild, was the first to sound the alarm Monday morning.</p> <p>"It was my understanding that due to staffing they had to close the booking area," said Folk. "They didn't have enough people to safely operate it."</p> <p>According to the union representative, the facility closed around 9 p.m. Sunday and reopened at 6:30 a.m. Monday.</p> <p>Hours after Folk made the announcement, Noah Haglund, spokesperson for the King County Department of Adult and Juvenile Detention, confirmed the temporary closure lasted roughly eight hours.</p> <p>"Even with this temporary pause last night, the jail made exceptions for serious and violent offenses, and booked at least one individual into custody," said Haglund. "Typically during the Sunday to Monday overnight shift, fewer than two people on average are brought to the jail for booking each hour."</p> <p>Folk claims that mandatory overtime and COVID have taken an already existing staffing crisis among correction officers from bad to worse.</p> <p>"We've had staffing issues for several years now. We're close to 100 positions down, but that booking area is vital," said Folk.</p>

	<p>Casey McNerthney, spokesperson for the King County Prosecutor’s Office, was also aware of the short-term shutdown.</p> <p>“Police officers, corrections officers, everyone is facing a staffing shortage that really impacts everyone countywide,” said McNerthney.</p> <p>He said that when detention centers like this shut down, it’s the crime victims who suffer.</p> <p>“They want to know that people will reasonably be held, and that’s what corrections officers and police officers want to (do),” said McNerthney. “It’s just a question of if they have the resources to do it.”</p>
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<b>HEADLINE</b>	<b>07/11 Dozens of shots fired South Seattle concert</b>
<b>SOURCE</b>	<a href="https://www.kiro7.com/news/local/50-shots-fired-during-capitol-hill-concert/UAESLSGLSBDKZDGRQXSXJUFJNVA/">https://www.kiro7.com/news/local/50-shots-fired-during-capitol-hill-concert/UAESLSGLSBDKZDGRQXSXJUFJNVA/</a>
<b>GIST</b>	<p>A concert at Washington Hall in South Seattle ended in gunfire on Sunday night, according to Seattle police and social media videos from the scene.</p> <p>Just before midnight on Sunday, Seattle police responded to a report of multiple gunshots at Washington Hall, located at 153 14th Avenue in South Seattle.</p> <p>According to social media video from the scene, multiple gunshots were heard inside the venue and fans were seen scrambling for the exits.</p> <p>Multiple officers arrived and found cases and bullet fragments in a parking lot, and multiple damaged vehicles and buildings along 14th Avenue, between East Fir Street and East Spruce Street.</p> <p>According to police, there were two shooting scenes along 14th Avenue, with the first in front of Washington Hall.</p> <p>According to dispatch logs with the Seattle Fire Department, the second scene was at the corner of 12th Avenue South and East Yesler Way.</p> <p>A vehicle involved in a collision was impounded by Seattle police after the driver and passenger(s) fled the scene. Police believe the vehicle was involved in the shooting.</p> <p>Performing were rappers D.B. Boutabag and Capolow for their The Road Trip Summer Tour, after stopping in Portland the night before.</p> <p>Officers found two people who sustained injuries during their escape.</p>
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<b>HEADLINE</b>	<b>07/11 Genetic genealogy grants help solve cases</b>
<b>SOURCE</b>	<a href="https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/law-justice/genetic-genealogy-grants-help-solve-wa-cold-cases/">https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/law-justice/genetic-genealogy-grants-help-solve-wa-cold-cases/</a>
<b>GIST</b>	<p>SEATTLE (AP) — Washington Attorney General Bob Ferguson said Monday that grants from his office have recently helped local law enforcement agencies solve three cold cases using genetic genealogy, and 20 more investigations are underway.</p> <p>The Grays Harbor County Sheriff’s Office used one of the grants to solve the 2003 abduction and rape of a 17-year-old girl, the Kitsap County Sheriff’s Office solved a 1995 murder, and Pullman police found the suspect responsible for home invasion sexual assaults in 2003 and 2004.</p> <p>During a news conference Monday, Ferguson called it “a message to survivors that they are not forgotten.”</p>



Genetic genealogy is the practice of entering a DNA profile into a public genealogy database to find relatives. In recent years, it has emerged as a powerful tool for identifying suspects who leave DNA behind at a crime scene; investigators can use it to construct a family tree that leads them to an otherwise unknown suspect.

The Attorney General's Office has devoted more than \$290,000 to assist local law enforcement agencies with felony cold case investigations through forensic genetic genealogy testing. The money is a small part of funding provided by the U.S. Justice Department to help address a backlog of untested rape kits in Washington state.

In 2020, a detective with the Gray's Harbor County Sheriff's Office, Darrin Wallace, obtained a \$5,000 grant to pay for genetic genealogy testing in the 2003 cold-case rape of a 17-year-old who had been abducted from her driveway in McCleary, west of Olympia. The girl was bound, blindfolded, attacked and returned to her neighborhood with a warning to keep quiet unless she wanted her house burned down and her father killed.

Over the years, investigators had submitted DNA samples from 37 potential suspects to the Washington State Patrol crime lab, with no hits. But genetic genealogy research conducted by DNA Labs International led investigators to three brothers who could have been the perpetrator.

Based on a description from the victim, detectives focused on one of the brothers — Paul J. Bieker, 51, who lived in McCleary. In May 2021 they followed him to a Starbucks, where he bought an iced coffee, and then to the rose garden at the Point Defiance Zoo in Tacoma, where he drank the beverage and discarded the cup.

A DNA sample taken from the cup matched that taken from the victim 18 years earlier. A jury convicted Bieker last month, and a judge sentenced him on Friday to 30 years in prison.

The crime bore some similarities to the still-unsolved killing of 10-year-old Lindsey Baum, who vanished from the same small town six years after the 17-year-old's abduction. But the sheriff's office said Monday that Bieker last week passed a polygraph when questioned about Baum's case, and while he remains a person of interest, he has dropped down their list of potential suspects.

A grant from the attorney general also paid for genetic genealogy research that linked Kenneth Downing, of Elk, to two home invasions and multiple rapes that occurred in 2003 and 2004. At the time, Downing had been working construction in the area.

Downing pleaded guilty on Friday in Whitman County Superior Court to four counts of first-degree rape and one count of second-degree assault with sexual motivation. He faces a standard sentencing range of 17 to 23 years when he is sentenced next month.

"Without the genealogy research and the grant from the AG's office, Mr. Downing would still be at large, may likely never have been caught, and we would never have been able to bring justice to the survivors and peace to the community," said Dan LeBeau, chief deputy prosecutor for the Whitman County Prosecutor's Office.

In March, the Kitsap County Sheriff's Office closed a cold murder case after genetic genealogy helped identify Douglas K. Krohne as the killer of 61-year-old Patricia Lorraine Barnes, 61, whose unclothed body was left in a ditch in 1995. Krohne died in 2016.

The forensic genealogy testing and research costs about \$5,400 on average, the Attorney General's Office said. So far the office has given out \$120,000 in grants; about \$170,000 is left. The money is reserved for sexually motivated cold cases with no active leads or DNA hits through criminal DNA databases.

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SOURCE	<a href="https://abcnews.go.com/US/officials-agree-release-surveillance-footage-ualde-shooting/story?id=86602983">https://abcnews.go.com/US/officials-agree-release-surveillance-footage-ualde-shooting/story?id=86602983</a>
GIST	<p>A chorus of Texas state leaders on Monday called on law enforcement officials to release surveillance video from inside Robb Elementary School during the May 24 mass shooting, including Republican Gov. Greg Abbott, who is running for reelection.</p> <p>"That video needs to be released, as well as the audio," Abbott told Austin ABC affiliate KVUE in an interview Monday afternoon. "The Texans need to know. But, frankly, the people of Uvalde, they deserve to get to know exactly what happened. And I urge that it happen very quickly."</p> <p>The deluge of support from top politicians capped a day of finger-pointing and about-faces from state leaders. At a hearing in Austin on Monday morning, a key Texas state legislator suggested that an agreement between law enforcement and local officials to disclose a portion of the footage had been struck -- only for one of the parties to the supposed agreement to quickly rebuff that claim.</p> <p>Rep. Dustin Burrows, the chairman of a special Texas House panel investigating the Robb Elementary shooting, announced Monday morning that the Texas Department of Public Safety and the mayor of Uvalde had reached a deal to disclose surveillance video showing officers gathered in the hallway outside of the classroom containing the 21-year-old gunman.</p> <p>But within hours of Burrows' comment, the Texas Department of Public Safety gave ABC News a July 8 letter it sent to the chairman informing him that the law enforcement agency could not unilaterally grant his request for the tapes, citing instruction from the Uvalde-area district attorney, Christina Busbee.</p> <p>"[Busbee] has objected to releasing the video and has instructed us not to do so," according to the letter, which was signed by DPS Deputy Director Freeman Martin. "As the individual with authority to consider whether any criminal prosecution should result from the events in Uvalde, we are guided by her professional judgment regarding the potential impact of releasing the video."</p> <p>After Monday's hearing concluded, Burrows clarified his earlier comments, telling ABC News, "We're still working on getting the video released, but no agreements." He later tweeted, "It is my intention to show the hallway video to the people of Uvalde, regardless of any agreement. I will not release it to the public until the people of Uvalde have seen it for themselves."</p> <p>Busbee did not respond to ABC News' requests for comment.</p> <p>This latest round of confusion is certain to exacerbate frustration within the Uvalde community. More than six weeks after the shooting, which ended the lives of 19 students and two teachers, several questions remain about the 77 minutes that elapsed between the time the shooter entered the school, and the moment law enforcement officers breached the classroom and killed him.</p> <p>Texas Department of Public Safety Director Steve McCraw characterized the police response as "an abject failure" during testimony before a Texas Senate panel last month, raising the stakes for officials to release video footage.</p> <p>On Sunday, families of the victims gathered in Uvalde's town square to voice their frustrations with state and local leaders over their handling of the shooting and subsequent investigations. The event was called The Unheard Voices March &amp; Rally, as a reflection of the sentiment shared by many residents of the small West Texas town.</p> <p>The public back-and-forth over whether and what investigative evidence to publicly share from inside the school has become a source of conflict between some family members of the victims and officials who claimed to represent their interests. Busbee has said that releasing footage could hinder her ongoing probe into whether the shooting warrants any criminal charges.</p> <p>Over the weekend, Uvalde Mayor Don McLaughlin accused Busbee of misleading family members about McLaughlin's support for releasing certain footage showing the police response during the rampage.</p>

	<p>On Friday, McLaughlin affirmed his support for the release of "all videos," including "the entire 77-minute hallway video ... up the moment of the breach." But less than 24 hours later, he issued a follow-up statement clarifying that he only sought the release of video showing the police response -- not any children or any images from the classroom.</p> <p>In the course of his about-face, McLaughlin claimed that Busbee had been "advising" families of the victims that he supported releasing videos showing deceased children, and accused her of "not telling the truth."</p> <p>McLaughlin later told ABC News that video from the hallway inside of Robb would "contradict misconceptions that Uvalde police were the only ones inside with weapons," and releasing the tape would "provide transparency to everyone."</p> <p>On Monday, Rep. Burrows said he would "continue to put pressure on the situation and consider all options in making sure that video gets out for the public to view," but did not commit to a timeline for a public release.</p> <p>"I can tell people all day long what it is I saw, the committee can tell people all day long what we saw, but it's very different to see it for yourself," Burrows said. "And we think that's very important."</p>
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<b>HEADLINE</b>	<b>07/11 Calif. 7-Eleven shootings: 2 dead, 3 injured</b>
<b>SOURCE</b>	<a href="https://abcnews.go.com/US/wireStory/cops-dead-wounded-california-eleven-stores-86627320">https://abcnews.go.com/US/wireStory/cops-dead-wounded-california-eleven-stores-86627320</a>
<b>GIST</b>	<p>LOS ANGELES -- Two people were killed and three wounded in robberies before dawn Monday at six 7-Eleven stores in Southern California and authorities said they were seeking the same lone gunman in at least three of the crimes.</p> <p>The string of violence occurred within a timespan of about five hours on July 11, or 7/11, the day when the national 7-Eleven brand celebrates its anniversary. This is its 95th year and on Monday stores gave out free Slurpee drinks.</p> <p>It wasn't immediately clear to investigators what prompted the violence in the cities of Ontario, Upland, Riverside, Santa Ana, Brea and La Habra.</p> <p>"I think the only person to answer that would be the suspect," said Officer Ryan Railsback, a spokesperson for the Riverside Police Department.</p> <p>But he said the date was no accident.</p> <p>"There's no way it can be a coincidence of it being 7-Eleven, July 11," Railsback said.</p> <p>7-Eleven Inc. issued a statement saying it was gathering information and working with police. "Our hearts are with the victims and their loved ones," the statement said.</p> <p>The first robbery happened at about midnight in Ontario, about 35 miles (56 kilometers) east of Los Angeles.</p> <p>The masked man brandished a handgun at the store's employee and demanded money, according to Ontario Cpl. Emily Hernandez. He did not fire any shots and the clerk was not injured. It was not immediately clear to investigators what, if anything, was stolen.</p> <p>The second robbery happened about 45 minutes later in Upland, less than 5 miles (8 kilometers) away from the Ontario store.</p>

The suspect approached the store clerk with a few items, “some drinks and things,” and brandished a semi-automatic handgun, Upland Sgt. Jake Kirk said. The man stole the items and about \$400 to \$500 in cash and fled. No shots were fired.

Surveillance photos, released by Upland and Brea police, show a masked man wearing a black sweatshirt with a hood over his head. The sweatshirt had white lettering with green leaves on the front.

While police in La Habra, Brea and Santa Ana have said they believe they are seeking the same suspect, officials in Ontario, Upland and Riverside have not yet made that determination though they said they were aware of the other crimes at 7-Eleven stores.

"It could potentially be the same person but we're not confirming that at this time," Kirk said.

About an hour after the Upland robbery and 25 miles (40 kilometers) away in Riverside, a gunman brandished a gun and robbed the 7-Eleven clerk, then turned the weapon on a customer, opened fire and fled, Railsback said. Police believe the clerk handed over cash from the register. The shooting victim was in grave condition.

“It doesn't appear to be any reason that the suspect shot the customer,” Railsback said. “It sounds like the clerk gave him whatever he asked for.”

Railsback said criminals typically know that robberies at convenience stores rarely yield large amounts of money, especially during the overnight hours.

“If you go hit a liquor store or a 7-Eleven or a fast food place, you're not going to get a lot of cash out of it,” he said. “It's kind of odd that they would do this.”

Another shooting occurred around 3:20 a.m., about 24 miles (39 kilometers) away, in Santa Ana, authorities said.

Officers responding there reported gunfire and found a man dead in the 7-Eleven parking lot with a gunshot wound to his upper torso, according to Santa Ana Sgt. Maria Lopez.

“At this moment, we don't believe he was an employee,” Lopez said of the victim. “We don't really know yet what he was doing there in a parking lot, if he was a potential customer or just walking by.”

Surveillance video shows the suspect dropping items — believed to be the victim's belongings — as he fled, Lopez said.

About 40 minutes later, a 7-Eleven employee in Brea was shot and killed, Brea Police Capt. Phil Rodriguez said.

Less than an hour later, officers in neighboring La Habra were sent to a reported robbery at a 7-Eleven. They discovered two gunshot victims around 4:55 a.m., according to Sgt. Sumner Bohee.

Authorities have not disclosed the victims' conditions.

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